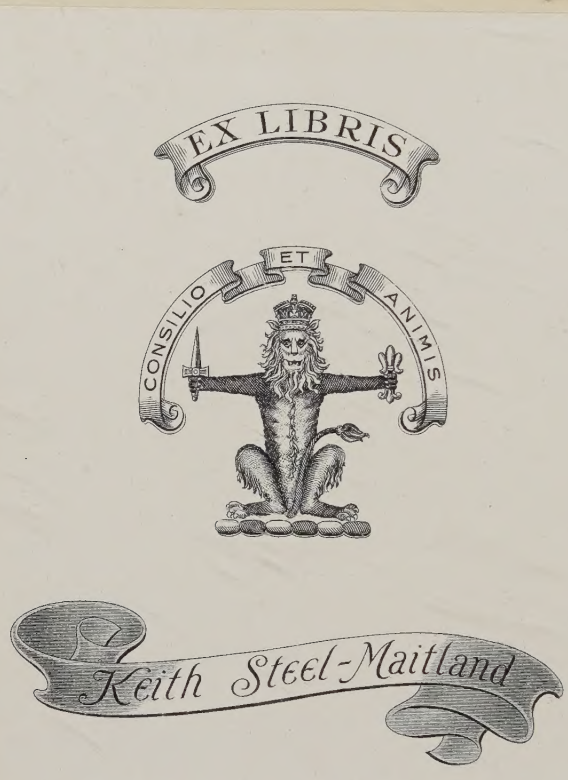
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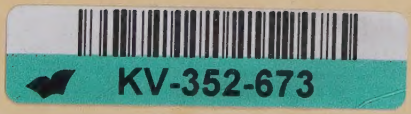
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LETTERS OF RICHARD WAGNER

VOLUME I

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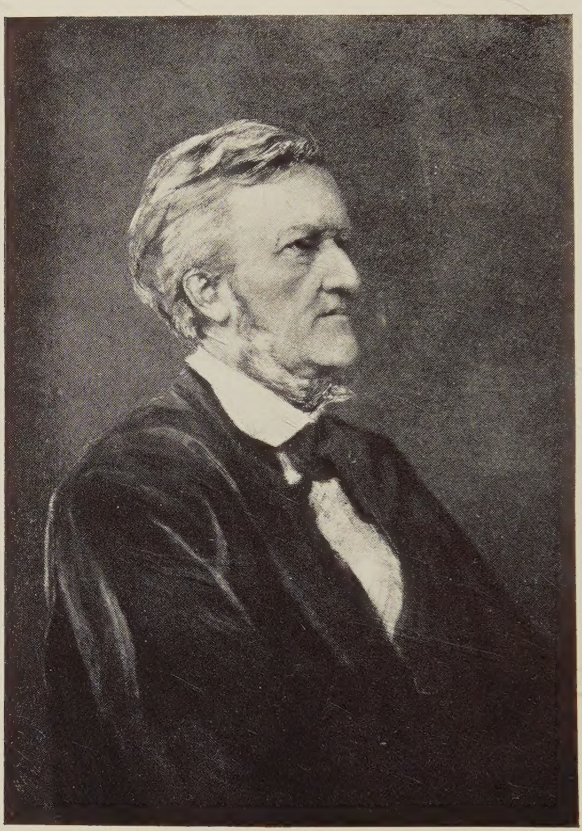

RICHARD WAGNER

From the painting by H. Herkomer, Beyreuth

LETTERS OF RICHARD WAGNER

SELECTED AND EDITED
BY
WILHELM ALTMANN

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
M. M. BOZMAN

VOLUME ONE

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

This selection of Richard Wagner's letters has of necessity been determined as to bulk by practical considerations of publication, but as regards choice of material, the primary intention has been to form a supplement to Wagner's own great autobiography, *Mein Leben,* which was edited for the first time with critical and explanatory notes by the present writer and published by the Bibliographical Institute of Leipzig. This autobiography in its earliest form, as issued by the Villa Wahnfried in 1911, closes prematurely with Wagner's summons to the court of King Ludwig II. of Bavaria, and it has therefore been thought desirable to illustrate the Master's life after May 1864 from his letters of that period as exhaustively as possible, even though, unfortunately, these are neither so numerous nor of such literary merit as those of his middle period. Moreover, it was not possible to construct the story of his boyhood from his own letters; but apart from this omission, I believe that I have been able to give the public a comprehensive and readable picture of the Master's life in a selection from the letters made principally with an eye to the central fact of interest, namely the development of the creative artist within him, though it should also throw light upon his social life and the men and women among whom he lived.

From this selection it will also be seen that Wagner was an excellent letter writer from first to last. Perusal of many of these letters affords a high degree of æsthetic enjoyment. They show the writer as a man of lightning changes of mood. When he sat down to write a letter he frequently represented matters in a rosier light than the facts would justify. Occasionally a letter would grow under his hand into a veritable treatise, especially when he dealt with æsthetic theory and literary questions, or when he felt challenged to an exposition of his own work.

The immense quantity of material before us is due to the fact that, when exiled from German soil, Wagner, with his great need of self-expression, was thrown back on letter writing as his principal means of intercourse, and it is absolutely necessary for our present purpose to omit matter of minor importance; for instance, items of news appearing in several letters are given but once in this selection.

Those who wish to study the subject more thoroughly will naturally wish to know more of the very penetrating letters to Liszt and Mathilde Wesendonck, and will of course refer to the corresponding passages in *Mein Leben*.

It is hoped that the short summary appended and the notes, brief as they are, will help to an understanding of the subject. Sources are indicated and a list of published collections of Wagnerian letters will be found below. The index affords information as to persons mentioned in the letters, more particularly those to whom the letters are addressed.

In every case the date is placed at the head of the letter, even where Wagner put it at the foot, in order to make the chronology clear at a glance.

The place of first publication of these letters is noted in *Gesammelte Briefe* (Collected Letters) of Richard Wagner, edited by Julius Kapp (Leipzig, 1914), but interrupted by the European War and brought down only to July 1850, while all the reprints known to me of over three thousand letters are mentioned in my book *Richard Wagners Briefe nach Zeitfolge und Inhalt* (Leipzig, 1905). It seemed to me superfluous to mention the source of each letter in this selection, but in every case where a letter is to be found in some collection difficult of access, or is not plainly indicated by the name of Wagner's correspondent, I note the origin. As far as Kapp's collection reaches (that is to No. 179), I was able to follow him in the main, and the other collections from which I made my selection are given below in alphabetical order. When no publisher or place of publication is mentioned, copyright is in the hands of Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel of Leipzig.

An Theodor Apel. 1832–40 (1910).
Bayreuther Briefe (Bayreuth Letters). 1871–83 (vol. i. 1907; vol. ii. entitled *An Seine Künstler* (To his Artistes), 1908).
An Breitkopf und Härtel. 1830–74 (1911. Cf. *Briefwechsel mit seinen Verlegern* (Correspondence with Publishers), vol. i.).
An Hans von Bülow. 1847–69 (Jena, 1916. Eugen Diederichs).
An Peter Cornelius. 1861–72. In *An Freunde und Zeitgenossen* (To Friends and Contemporaries).
Familienbriefe (Family Letters). 1832–74 (1907).
An Friedrich Feustel. 1871–82. *Bayreuther Briefe*, vol. i.
An Freunde und Zeitgenossen (To Friends and Contemporaries). 1834–83 (1909).
An Emil Heckel. 1871–83 (1899). Also in *Bayreuther Briefe*, vol. i.
An Karl Klindworth. 1855–71. In *Freunde und Zeitgenossen*.

An seine Künstler (To his Artistes). 1872–83 (1908. Cf. *Bayreuther Briefe*, vol. ii.).
An Franz Liszt. 1841–82. In *Briefwechsel zwischen Wagner und Liszt* (3rd enlarged ed. 1910).
An Malwida von Meysenbug. 1860–7. In *Freunde und Zeitgenossen.*
An Angelo Neumann. 1876–83. Angelo Neumann's *Memories of Richard Wagner* (Leipzig, 1907. L. Staackmann).
An Albert Niemann. 1857–82. In *Richard Wagner und Albert Niemann*, by W. Altmann (Berlin, 1924. Georg Stilke).
An Heinrich Porges. 1863–70. *Freunde und Zeitgenossen.*
An Gräfin Pourtalès. 1862–3. *Freunde und Zeitgenossen.*
An Anton Pusinelli. 1843–77. *Freunde und Zeitgenossen.*
An Frau Julie Ritter. 1849–68 (Munich, 1920. F. Bruckmann).
An August Röckel. 1849–65 (2nd ed. 1903).
An Ludwig Schindelmeisser. 1837–62. *Freunde und Zeitgenossen.*
An Ludwig Schnorr. 1861–5. *Freunde und Zeitgenossen.*
An B. Schotts Söhne. 1830–82 (1911. Cf. *Briefwechsel mit seinen Verlegern*, vol. i.).
An Theodor Uhlig. 1849–52 (1888).
Briefwechsel mit seinen Verlegern (Correspondence with Publishers). 1830–82 (1911. With Breitkopf and Härtel, vol. i.; with B. Schott and Sons, vol. ii.).
An Minna Wagner. 1842–63 (1908).
An Mathilde Wesendonck. 1852–75 (44th ed. 1914).
An Otto Wesendonck. 1852–75 (2nd ed. 1905).
An Elsa Wille. 1852–70 (2nd ed. 1908).

In letters to correspondents other than those mentioned above the source is indicated. Those taken from *Familienbriefe* may be recognised by the fact that the relationship is given in the superscription.

A revision of the text according to Wagner's manuscripts could not be made and was not intended. The necessity for a *critical* collected edition of the letters, particularly of those published by the Villa Wahnfried, is shown by a comparison of the facsimile of a letter to Hans von Wolzogen given here (No. 705) with the version in print hitherto.

The *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* (Collected Writings and Poems) referred to are the official edition (6th ed., Leipzig, 1912–14; 16 vols.).

Letters to Hans von Bülow are reprinted by permission of Messrs. Eugen Diederichs, Jena; to Albert Niemann and Franz Betz, by Messrs. Georg Stilke, Berlin; to Julie Ritter, by Messrs.

F. Bruckmann, Munich; to Lorenz von Düfflipp, Julius Fröbel and Ludwig II., by Messrs. C. H. Beck, Munich; to Edward Devrient, by the *Deutsche Revue*, Herr Geh. Dr. Obser, Karlsruhe; to Lorenz von Düfflipp and Robert Franz, by the *Zeitschrift für Musik*, Herr Professor Dr. Schering, Halle; to Editha von Rhaden, by the Deutsche Verlagsanstalt (Publishing Institute), Stuttgart and Berlin. I take this opportunity of thanking them and also the Bibliographical Institute.

As regards photographs and facsimiles, I am indebted to the kind assistance of the Prussian State Library, Berlin; the Museum of Civic History, Leipzig, as represented by its curator, Herr Dr. W. Lange, and to Baron Hans von Wolzogen, Bayreuth.

I am also greatly indebted to the willing assistance of the staff of the autobiographical section of the Bibliographical Institute for corrections.

PROF. DR. WILHELM ALTMANN,
Director of the Music Section of the Prussian State Library, Berlin.

May 1925.

PREFATORY NOTE

It is difficult to obtain a just and balanced view of such an extraordinary genius as Wagner. The autobiography, *My Life*, is by no means satisfactory, as it was severely censored by the powers that reigned at Wahnfried. Moreover, it only carries us up to the year 1864, and stops at a period when contact with the Master is perhaps most interesting from many points of view. In the present volumes we now have the letters right up to the end in 1883, with a specially liberal selection from the last period. Wagner as a man was by no means as seraphically white as he and his friends would have us believe. Nor was he so black as the recent denigratory biographers have painted him. The truth lies somewhere between the two; and these Letters will form a sure guide, provided they are read with a certain amount of circumspection.

Here at last, in these volumes, we can follow the real man from phase to phase in biographical order. Wagner "fancied himself" as a letter-writer, and spread himself out. The picture is remarkably complete. Though the statements in one letter occasionally contradict those in another, the Letters are obviously sincere in a way that the Autobiography is not, and they cover a far wider range and period. The omission of the letters to Nietzsche is perhaps a little surprising, but they are readily available for those who like these more abstruse matters. The idea of adding the five letters to the Philharmonic Society, London, to this English edition was very tempting, especially as they have never yet been published, but they would have spoiled the balance of this excellent selection, the scope of which has never been equalled before.

A. EAGLEFIELD HULL

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

FOLLOWING the method of the German editor, textual omissions from letters are indicated as follows:

Two stars * *, one or more words omitted.
Three stars * * *, one or more sentences omitted.
Four stars * * * *, one or more paragraphs omitted.

Words inserted in the text by the editor are enclosed in square brackets, and for the purposes of this edition his notes are treated as footnotes.

A few notes have been added by the translator and are indicated by the word (TRANS.) after each.

References to *Mein Leben* are given to the authorised English translation, *My Life*, 2 vols., Constable & Co., London, 1911, except in a few instances where the reference is to a note in Dr. Altmann's annotated edition of *Mein Leben* published by the Bibliographischen Institut, Leipzig.

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PART I

STUDENT YEARS
WANDERJAHRE AND
FIRST RESIDENCE IN PARIS

1830 – 1842

LETTERS OF RICHARD WAGNER

PART I

(*a*) STUDENT YEARS 1830–1833

I. TO B. SCHOTT AND SONS, MAINZ

LEIPZIG, *6th October*, 1830.

SIR,

For some time past I have made Beethoven's last glorious symphony the subject of my deepest study, and the more I come to recognise the high value of this work the more I regret that it should remain almost entirely unrecognised and unheeded by the greater part of the musical public. A suitable pianoforte arrangement seemed to me the way to make this masterpiece more accessible, and such, to my great regret, I have never met with (for Czerny's four-handed arrangement is obviously inadequate). Feeling very strongly on this subject, I have myself ventured to attempt the arrangement of this symphony for *two hands*, and have so far succeeded in rendering the first and perhaps most difficult movement with all possible clarity and fullness. I now therefore desire to approach your much-respected firm with the question as to whether they might feel inclined to take up such an arrangement (for I am naturally unwilling to carry so laborious a task any farther without this assurance). Had I this assurance I would set about the work forthwith and complete what I have begun. I therefore humbly solicit a speedy reply [1] and beg to assure you of my diligence in anything which I undertake.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

RICHARD WAGNER.

My address is:

Leipzig, im Pichhof vorm Hallischen Tore, 1 Treppe.

[1] The answer appears to have been favourable. Schott's received the MS. by Easter 1831, but when Wagner wrote reminding them of it on 6 August, 1831, they sent it back to him. Wagner tried his luck with the firm again on 15 June, 1832. They accepted the MS. but did not print it, and filed it among the archives of the Villa Wahnfried on 11 January, 1872, at the wish of Frau Cosima Wagner. Cf. *Wagners Briefwechsel mit seinen Verlegern* (Correspondence with his Publishers), vol. ii., No. 142.

2. TO MESSRS. BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

LEIPZIG, *5th August* [1831].

I ask your indulgence, Sirs, for troubling you with a petition, the success of which means very much to me. In substance it is a request for work upon revisions and arrangements for the pianoforte, touching which I can offer for your consideration the most recent examples of my work in proof of my ability. I am driven to make this application by lack of employment and the desire to obtain work of this nature. To convince you, Sirs, of my usefulness, I venture to offer myself for gratuitous test-work in both departments, and, should I have the good fortune to win your confidence by this means, I should hold it an honour to serve you at *less* than the usual *rate of pay*. Punctuality and exactitude in my work will be my constant endeavour, in order that I may win your further confidence.

In the hope of receiving some such trial-work at your earliest convenience,

I remain, Sirs, your humble servant,

RICHARD WAGNER, Stud. Mus.[1]

3. TO HIS SISTER, OTTILIE WAGNER, COPENHAGEN

LEIPZIG, *3rd March* [1832].

MY DEAR, GOOD OTTILIE,

For once I actually come to the point of sending you a few lines in your far-away Denmark, after a separation which has already been a long one; and now I want to tell you so *much* of this last year, so critical for me, that I fear my sheet of writing-paper will scarcely last out. Well, then, to begin with the thing which lies nearest my heart—how *very* much it grieved me that I could not take leave of you when you went away from here! Nothing, during all your absence, has hurt me so much. I was sorrowful indeed when I stayed at the inn at Kulm where, as Mother tells me, you took your last farewells. * * Oh, how it hurts me to have to tell you that for a time I lived wildly and forgot my ambition in the company of other students, bringing much trouble and care on my good mother thereby, till at last I pulled myself together and was so fortified in my reformation by my new master that I have now reached a point whence I may regard my plans for the higher activities of my future life as already firmly laid down.

[1] A substantially similar letter of 6 August to the *Bureau de Musique* (C. F. Peters), Leipzig, was also unsuccessful.

You must know that for the last half-year and more I have been the pupil of Weinlig, the precentor here, who is justly held to be the *greatest living contrapuntist*, and is besides so excellent a man that I love him as a father. He has taught me with such loving care that, on his own word, I may regard my pupil days as already over, and he now stands at my side simply as counsellor and friend. How much he himself loves me you may judge from the fact that, when mother asked him for particulars of his fees after six months' instruction, he said that he would indeed be unreasonable if he were to take pay over and above the pleasure he had had in teaching me, and that my industry and the hopes he had formed of me rewarded him amply. Now, as you will imagine, all this has borne fruit. Last Christmas an *Overture* of mine was performed at the theatre and last week actually at the *big*[1] *concert*! As you must know, this last is no trifle, for before anything by a young composer is accepted for the concert the work has to be passed by all the musical experts of the committee of management for the concert, and the fact that my *Overture* was thus accepted will show you that there is something in it. Now I must tell you something about the evening of the performance which was so important an occasion for me. Rosalie and Louisa were there. I could not possibly expect a striking success, for, firstly, overtures are seldom applauded at the concert, and, secondly, a short time before, overtures by Marschner and Lindpaintner had been performed without setting a single hand in motion, nevertheless my suspense was frightful and I nearly died of fright and apprehension. * * * Picture to yourself my surprise and delight when at the close of my *Overture* the whole room began to applaud just as if they had heard the greatest masterpiece! I can assure you I hardly knew where I was!—Louisa was so moved that she wept. * * * One more piece of news. This week a *Pianoforte Sonata* of mine has appeared in print, and I have dedicated it to my Weinlig. They gave me twenty thaler notes for it. I would have liked to send you a copy, but I realise that the cost of carriage is almost greater than the price for which you can obtain it yourself in Copenhagen. So just go to a music-shop and have it ordered from Leipzig under the title *Sonata for Pianoforte by Richard Wagner. A first work. Breitkopf and Härtel, Leipzig.* It is not very difficult, and in case you cannot play it at once for yourself, ask Fräulein Lottchen in my name to play it to you. I shall be delighted if it pleases you. Recently I composed an *Overture* to *King Enzio*, a new tragedy by Raupach, which has been given at each performance of that piece in the theatre. Everyone liked it. * * *

[1] i.e. one of the concerts at the Cloth Hall (Gewandhaus).

21st March.

All this long time I have not succeeded in finishing my letter. Meanwhile we have received your last letter, and since Rosalie herself is answering it and these lines are but enclosures it is unnecessary to give you news of us. Rosalie's letter will doubtless tell you enough about us. How much I rejoice to know from your last letter that you are homesick for us, for it will certainly hasten your return. Oh, do come quickly, so that when Rosalie goes away I shall not be all alone without anyone akin to me in matters of music as well as in blood! Besides, during the interval in this letter I have written another *Overture* which I am to conduct myself at the Musical Society [*Euterpe*]. Perhaps I shall get it performed at the big concert, too—Heavens! there I am again on the subject of my compositions, and to cut the old song short, I will make an end of my letter forthwith. * * *

4. TO THEODORE APEL, HEIDELBERG

LEIPZIG, *16th December* [1832].

At last, at last!—after this fatally long silence, you are to get a little pledge of my undiminished love and friendship for you. * * * In every one of the innumerable different phases of mood and feeling which have taken possession of me during our long separation my first desire has always been to share my joys and sorrows with you. Oh, had I but possessed a magic wand to conjure me to you or you to me, you would have seen my very heart laid bare to you! But how can one plough through such oceans of distance upon the slow keel of a pen! Many a time when pressed to the limit of endurance I have accomplished half a letter, but I never found it possible to finish one. What is the good of it all!

Now let me give you a cursory sketch of recent happenings in my life. After you left here everything seemed desert and dead. I felt cut off from outward things whilst [?] waxed in me all the more strongly. My mother and sisters went to stay in Vienna for a considerable time—I was forsaken of God and of the world! Then my divine Muse of music chose to descend upon me and, believe me, it was under such conditions that I set to work upon my most powerful work up to now, my *Symphony*, and finished it in the space of six weeks. That completed—the doors of the outer life were opened to me once more—I journeyed to Vienna, stayed there a month, and all was well. But wait! I went on from Vienna to Pravonin, an estate belonging to Count Pachta in Bohemia. I passed five weeks there in the lap of Nature, of most glorious Nature. Oh! glorious

days, for not only Nature but—that I should say it!—Love exalted me! Picture Jenny as a paragon of beauty, the ideal of my glowing fancy, and you will know all. * * * My eyes created in her the perfection of all they desired to find and therein lay my misfortune! I thought I saw my passion returned, and, as a matter of fact, it only needed a bold advance on my part to make sure of such a return on hers! * * * Well, finally—indeed it could not, could not last!—finally, of course, my eyes were opened! We travelled [to] Prague—and, alas!—you will be able to imagine all the things which can wound a burning passion—that which can *kill* it is more terrible than all! Conjecture it, then, for yourself and lend me your sympathy; she was unworthy of my love!——

The chill of death descended on my spirit. Oh, could I then have renounced all fair hopes forthwith, could all feeling have been numbed, I should have counted myself happy! * * * When I sought to warm myself with the last embers of my passion and felt them flicker and pale under the cold breath of death, how hopelessly I gazed into the fiery river of the past, into the glacier of the future! Enough, enough, and more than enough! For despite the infinite emptiness of my heart, I still have a longing for love—and, what enrages me most, I seem to be sound and well from head to foot!——

Such are the circumstances under which I began the book of my opera [*Die Hochzeit*[1]], and, that finished, returned to Leipzig about a fortnight ago.

3rd January [1833].

I have abandoned the operatic text[2] and torn it up. Soon you shall hear of another. * * *

[1] *The Wedding.* (TRANS.)

[2] All that is extant is to be found in vol. xii. of the *Musical Works*, published in 1912 by M. Balling.

(*b*) *WANDERJAHRE*, 1833–1839

5. TO THEODORE APEL, HEIDELBERG

WÜRZBURG, 14*th March*, 1833.

After writing to you from Leipzig I waited only for the performance of my *Symphony* at the Gewandhaus [1] Concert (which was successful), and then, about the end of January, set out for Würzburg, where I am now living. As you know, I have a brother [Albert] here whom I had been intending to visit for some time. Quite by chance I found a short engagement almost at once as conductor at the theatre which will keep me here almost till Easter. I sat down to-day, rummaged in my writing-case, and found a partly written letter to you of a date which seems very long ago to me. I was almost overwhelmed by the thought that we are now so much nearer to each other and that is why I am at once setting myself to finish what I began. I will be silent about the events of the mind and soul—we are so near that I find myself almost speaking aloud to you. Dearest and best of friends, hearken to the most earnest petition I have ever made to you. If it is in any way possible, in any way practicable, traverse the eighteen miles which separate us as soon as you can and come to me, if only for a few days. Oh, even one glimpse would make me endlessly happy! Tell me, can you make this sacrifice for our friendship's sake? You can only do so if you love me as I love you, and, indeed, I must almost despair of that! I cannot possibly leave here, but rest assured that if I could I would hasten to your embrace, though it is perhaps easier for you than for me. If it is impossible for you to come, at least write to me and tell me how long you are staying in Heidelberg and I will try to get there later and pay you a visit. What a reunion that will be! It will console me for the past and for the future. Yes, my Theodore, the future too presses heavily upon me—life is beginning to seem an extremely grave affair. I must see if I can find some sanctuary this summer where I can finish my opera [*Die Feen*[2]] before winter. I have finished the libretto and have begun the composition. I can go to Leipzig at any moment, indeed, but I am determined against living in this town which will some day be the origin of my fame; one must always appear as a novelty to one's own countrymen, especially as rivalry and cabals have appeared even thus early! Moreover I must now see where I can earn something, which I cannot do in Leipzig. * * *

[1] Cloth Hall. (TRANS.)

[2] *The Fairies*. (TRANS.)

6. TO HIS SISTER, ROSALIE WAGNER, LEIPZIG

WÜRZBURG, *11th December*, 1833.

I must confess to you, my one and only Rosalie, that your letter made a very deep impression on me, for it came at a time when the only reason for my silence was that a certain sense of shame made me doubtful how to approach you. I think I may almost conjecture that it must have been a great disappointment to you to see that the sacrifice you made on my behalf had failed of its purpose,[1] and you may perhaps have been angry with me even for the way I gave you news of your unfulfilled expectations. * * * I can never describe to you how I have been tortured by terrifying mental images of this sort, contrasting as they do with the feelings which my daily work upon my opera [*Die Feen*] arouses in me. May God, or, still more, may *you* be thanked! I have been relieved of many of these anxieties by your * * wonder-working letter, though from another point of view it troubled me, for having read it I was unable to work for several days. I wanted to answer it at once—but—my opera still lacked its last *finale*. The day before yesterday I finished it, and with it the entire opera. It was just midday, near twelve o'clock, and the bells pealed out from every steeple as I wrote *Finis* beneath it——that pleased me exceedingly! Now, dearest, the *composition* of my opera is finished and I have only to orchestrate the last act! My somewhat pedantic habit of writing the score in as unblemished and clear a manner as possible has held me up in my work of orchestration more than anything else. All the same, I think if I am really industrious I ought to have finished this last piece of work upon my opera in some three weeks and shall be able to leave here in about four weeks. But how am I to tell you in what sort of mood I have been working lately! With almost every note I have thought of you all,—ah! of *you*, and this was a feeling that often spurred me on, but often, too, so overmastered me that I could work no longer and had to seek the open air. It often happened so and I always took it to be a happy presentiment, but ah! how enchanted I was to find evidence of a like sympathy in your letter! Oh, God grant that I do not disappoint your happy expectations of me—but that can never be—it all flowed out of my innermost soul and it is said that such feelings pass over into the souls of others——

There is a concert to-morrow at which I have been invited to give a few numbers from my opera. An *amateuse* with a beautiful voice will sing Ada's great aria, and a trio will follow sung by the same lady, Albert, and another young bass singer. * * * *

[1] Wagner had refused the post of Director of Music offered him in Zurich because he was too much occupied with his opera *Die Feen*.

Why do I chatter about all these matters? It is just the longing to share everything with you! God in heaven! the time is really not so far off—I shall soon be with you all—with *you*! But I must not give myself up to that thought so completely, else I cannot write another word—and I have still so much to say to you if I could but arrange my thoughts! I am living in a perpetual state of excitement—last night again I got no sleep. What can I say?—I have long had to forgo rest at night—I always think of you—and —interminably of my opera! * * *—I have been dreaming about you constantly and of how I come home to you and how I am received by you! Amazing! My dreams of this kind have always worked up steadily to a climax; in my first my reception by you was just commonplace—often cold—but later it became more intimate, more loving, and now my dreams paint it as I can only hope it may be in reality. I hope this forebodes nothing. You will surely be good to me even though I have deserved it little.

What you write me about the acceptance and performance of my opera in Leipzig satisfies me very well and I thank you for your care and trouble. I think everything should go well—no, I do not merely think it, I *hope* it and would be horrified if my hopes were deceived!——But, tell me, you say among other things that *Hans Heiling* pleases the public so well and constantly draws full houses. I assure you this news pleased me very much from a certain point of view. We produced the opera here, too, and I think the music very pretty indeed, especially the solo pieces, but in no other opera by Marschner up to now have I been struck by such a complete lack of general effect. I don't know, but he seems to have missed the best chances of effect entirely! What poor finales to the acts, and what a lack of melody in the choruses! In the second finale he treats the culminating point of the whole: "*Er stammt vom Reich der Gnomen und der Zwerge, und ist der Geisterfürst der Berge!*" [1] so negligently and emphasises the climax so little that one is left to suppose nothing important is toward! In short, not one single number really *grips*! I must confess it might almost encourage in me exaggerated hopes for my opera! It is a pity that matters are so with your female singers—I want a really good voice and impressive acting—a kind of Devrient would not come amiss; from what I know of Gerhard her voice might prove too weak, but since she appears to have done well as Alice,[2] I have had hopes.—Above all Eichberger must remain, for the tenor unquestionably

[1] "He comes from the realms of gnome and dwarf and is the ghostly ruler of the mountains." (TRANS.)

[2] In *Robert the Devil*, by Meyerbeer.

has the biggest and most attractive part; if he should leave, it would be a great calamity to me! Albert very much wants this part and would certainly be magnificent in it—if he should some time come as a "star" to Leipzig!

As for the other matter you write to me about, dearest Rosalie, let me be silent about it now. It has stirred my feelings too painfully, wounded me too sharply for me to be able to discuss it much with you now, but I shall soon be with you all, bringing with me, I trust, an offering that will at least lighten many of your sorrowful reflections and ease our good mother of many a care!——I thank you for what you said—the fount from which it sprung, your sweet confidence, honours me very much!——

What is mother doing—what are you all doing?—Ah well! I shall soon see you all again!—I am a regular spoilt child and grieve every moment that I am away from you! I hope, my Rosalie, that in the course of this life we shall yet be *a greal deal* together! Would you like that?—I am endlessly glad that for the rest all goes well with you—give them all my greeting and don't let them fear my arrival. I have been away from you about a year—God grant that it has been to real profit! * * * *

Albert writes too—how glad I am that he has thereby relieved me of a task of which I think with horror!—I can do no more than beseech you for your kindness and forbearance!—Heavens! I am really only twenty years of age!

Give them all my love once more, especially to my dear mother, and tell them all about their Richard who has given them so much care and trouble. But you, my one and only Rosalie, you are my good angel. Be ever so!

7. TO FRANZ HAUSER, LEIPZIG

Leipzig, [*March*] 1834.

In this letter I am taking the way lately suggested by yourself, of setting down in writing ideas, rejoinders and conclusions called up by your recent criticism (as kindly offered as it was penetrating) of my opera [*Die Feen*] and of attaining calmness and lucidity of mind the sooner by this means. But first of all I cannot do otherwise than offer you my deepest and most heartfelt thanks for that same admirable criticism and the attestation of your generous friendship, for which I am forever your debtor. Believe me, I know the worth of that sincerity, and although it may for the moment have evoked the bitterest sensations of disappointed hopes, I have all the more confidence in you and in those associated

with you, for I have been schooled to this effect; believe, too, that I have learned my lesson and have not been brought up on flattery. It was my good fortune to have the most sincere and strict of teachers; my lessons with Herr Müller gave me a whole series of proofs of a sincerity almost pedantic in its strictness. He hardened me against the shrinking sensitiveness of a boy's too easily wounded aspirations and taught me to recognise the usefulness of frank criticism, even when offered with a motive not entirely unmixed. When I had completed the study of harmony under Herr Müller and entered upon the sphere of counterpoint, I felt—and those of whom I sought advice also felt—that he no longer sufficed me as a teacher and I therefore began to study under Herr Weinlig. This man, to whom I owe a larger debt than any achievements of mine can ever discharge, judged rightly and promptly where I was most lacking; he set aside for the moment the actual study of counterpoint in order to establish my knowledge of harmony on an absolutely secure basis. He at once set me to study the strict, concise style of harmony and kept me at it till he thought me absolutely secure of it, for in his opinion this concise style was the first and only basis from which one could learn to handle freer and richer harmonies, besides being also essential for the study of counterpoint. He next set me to learn counterpoint upon the best-established method and the strictest principles. When he thought he had laid in me a sure foundation in this last and most difficult part of a general education in music, and believed that my study of it was complete and ready to serve me in the most difficult fields of composition, he dismissed me with these words: "I herewith release you from tutelage, as a master frees his apprentice after he has learned everything which the master could teach him."

I feel greatly fortified by this deep and earnest course of study, I feel that it gives me the means to make progress and take advantage of the education life freely offers. Furthermore, my teacher believed, and so do I, that publicity must be sought because thereby the world may be shaped. In the course of my studies with him, Herr Weinlig not only did not oppose, but eagerly desired and furthered the performance of instrumental compositions worked on during that time. The consequence was that during and after that period several *Overtures* and finally a *Symphony* of mine were performed at our subscription concerts, and I am glad to be able to say that it never did me any harm, and that, besides the great advantage of gaining greater knowledge of my medium by hearing my work, I won friends and obtained the sympathetic attention of the public. I now cherish the same purpose and the same desires

in regard to my opera. You * * now wish, if I read your true intention aright, to rob me of that purpose and those desires. My opera does not please you; what is more, you dislike my whole tendency, which you declare to be contrary to your own view of art. The first objection is naturally rooted in the second. Our mutual attitudes are such that I cannot here discuss any detail, for each individual condemnation is naturally included in your general condemnation; and it is just this general condemnation, if you will allow me to say so, which seems to me to have been irrevocably fixed in you before you even looked into my work; for I would claim that my general tendency is the tendency of our day. You could have prophesied to me upon each several point and had in fact dealt with them before you knew my work in detail. You find all the failings of our age in it, while at the same time you declare void every appeal to the same. I am at heart convinced that you hold only those forms valid which answer to the unattainable models of old times and detect superfluous use of externals even in Mozart, which seems to me to show that the style of Gluck alone really conforms to your ideas. You ask me why I do not orchestrate like Haydn? Furthermore, in everything contrary to your theory, you find not alone the influence of what are considered the innovations of our day (I may say here I believe I have tried to avoid as far as possible any of its aberrations and, indeed, have abstained from things which Marschner, for example, allows),—I repeat, you attribute this not only to these innovations, but to a lack of content, and accuse me of total ignorance of how to handle my medium, ignorance of harmony, ignorance of the rudiments of study. You think that none of my work has genuine emotion behind it. You will allow no inspiration anywhere. If I am not mistaken, this sums up your case as regards the value of my work, your final judgment upon it. I have been at some trouble to envisage them to myself—and I can find no rejoinder! The attitude of the accused to the accuser and the accusation is this—he finds it at once inadmissible and impossible either to refute his accuser or to apologise for his fault! I am silent because any sort of opposition would seem to me presumptuous. But since it is neither my intention nor my desire to interpose in the negotiations already set on foot for the production of my opera—indeed, it is my conviction that only by the performance of the same can I reach my intended goal —I would like, with all due modesty, to answer you as far as I can upon the question of the practicability of performance. I have just received a letter from my brother [Albert] pressing me to tell him what arrangements have been made for the performance of

my opera. It incidentally calls up memories which comfort and encourage me. In my brother, whom for the moment I am thinking of merely as a professional singer, I had a very strict, I might almost say a merciless, critic, and he made a vigorous attack on the impracticability, in places, of my voice parts. Under his eye I revised and improved upon these passages to the best of my ability, and I assure you that I am prepared to make any further alteration of this kind that the singer may ask of me. It is notwithstanding self-evident that I cannot by these means introduce Italian *bel canto* into this [opera]. But I can still comfort myself with my brother's final verdict, which ran somewhat as follows: "Singers will heartily abuse your work and however much it has to be altered it will always be difficult for them; but whoever has the brains to understand it will be able to get a great effect with it." It is true enough that the opera is difficult to rehearse, but I venture to doubt whether it is harder than Marschner's operas, which are nevertheless performed in many places. I should have thought that the transition from one to the other would not be so difficult. Moreover, I have experimented upon it a little myself. Upon request I rehearsed the choruses in the Würzburg theatre and indeed often took part in the rehearsal of the entire opera.* * * I have also already rehearsed and performed certain numbers of my opera—a terzett and an aria —and we accomplished it without too much effort, and it was well received in the concert hall.——

I have written an extra aria [1] for my brother, one certainly no better and no easier than the corresponding number in my opera, and I may flatter myself I have got my effect, for I hear from Würzburg that it has been sung again and again with great success. Please do not read any wretched vanity on my part into this petty recital of my trifling experiences, but now that I face you on a life-and-death issue for my opera you will not misunderstand me if I cling, like the shipwrecked mariner, to the smallest spar which promises life and hope of safety. Small and insignificant as these experiences are, yet, if I may measure great things by little, they raise certain hopes and make me think that the performance of my opera is not an impossibility.* * * I ask you not to put any fatal obstacle in the way of the negotiations now in progress, and permit me, in order quietly to follow the usual routine, to fetch away the score and put it officially in the hands of the Herr Kapellmeister.[2] Let me, just this once, tempt God. * * * *

[1] To Marschner's *Vampyre* (published 1915 in vol. xv. of *Musical Works*).

[2] Kapellmeister Stegmayer also rejected *Die Feen*, which was first produced after Wagner's death, on 29 July, 1888, at Munich.

8. TO HIS SISTER, ROSALIE WAGNER, LEIPZIG

PRAGUE, *3rd July* [1834].

We did not leave Teplitz for Prague till last Monday, having remained there a fortnight, chiefly on account of the baths which Theodore [Apel] took for reasons of health and I more for enjoyment. The stay enchanted me and I think I shall remember the Milleschauer all my life. Prague, too, seems quite a different place to me now and I realise for the first time what a dull, depressed wight I was when last I roamed its streets. We are having unbroken fine weather and at this lovely time of year that makes everything seem bright and clear. I have enjoyed seeing the Raymanns and all goes well with them. Jenny has gone off very little in looks and Augusta is handsomer than ever. Apel is away. Settlements under the will [1] have worked out very much to the advantage of the girls. * * * The favourable attitude of Karl Pachta, who has come here from Milan, is particularly advantageous. He is behaving in a most friendly way towards them.—As for that animal, the old woman,[2] I want to beat her whenever I meet her. A fortunate opportunity has come for the girls—if they use it and free themselves from their environment they may come very well out of the business; if not, they may yet mix with artists and Bohemians and enjoy a fine life, and there is something to be said for this too!

We have not been here long and I have been about too little as yet to be able to give you much news of other matters. To-day I am going to visit Gerle, Kinsky, Weber and, above all, Stöger, to whom I have already been introduced. He seems to me to be a splendid man and his theatre is quite remarkable. The magnificence of the decoration and costumes makes the stage here seem something quite different, I scarcely recognise it again. The opera is flourishing, and among other things Lutzer is so improved that she will replace Devrient for us one of these days. I am enchanted with her — quite the new youthful school — thoroughly dramatic — a little more and she will be perfect. I shall keep an eye on her, she is an excellent "Ada." I have written out my libretto quite neatly and to-day I give it to Stöger. * * * *

Well, I am delighted to hear all your good reports of Ringelhardt,—he will certainly climb high. I am writing to him to-day and to Gerhard, and ah! how anxious and fearful it makes me! Supposing I have to pay for the happy days I am enjoying now? Often a torturing restlessness comes over me, driving me to return

[1] The two Raymanns were the natural daughters of Count Pachta, deceased.
[2] The mother of the Raymann girls.

home as soon as possible. I feel as if something awaited me there that I must combat with all my strength. Your letter and then the mention of my opera have made me uneasy and nothing but the force of the moment's happiness can banish the feeling.

Nothing will come of Vienna I am sure. We have already stayed too long and I am not sorry. We will travel back by Karlsbad, so that if you have not yet sent off the notes, leave things as they are.——

How are you all? I rejoice that Mother rejoiced.—How is Laube getting on? I am always thinking of him and am very anxious for him.— * * * *

Send the scores with the letter to Ringelhardt.

9. TO THEODORE APEL, ERMLITZ

RUDOLSTADT,[1] 13*th September* [1834].

I have several times meant to write to you * *, and I would rather have done so at any moment than this. It is true I have an hour to spare, but I am altogether so depressed, empty, dull and prosaic that I do not know how to appear before you with any sort of decent bearing. God made music simply to annoy me; it really strengthens me to go to a lecture now and then and the actual threshing out of music is nothing—but the kind of thing which has been happening to me this week is clearly deliberately designed by the Creator to plague me. You know I like Bellini's opera *Romeo and Juliet*—so far so good, but thereupon my nonsensical management must needs require me to get it rehearsed in five days, because I once unluckily said that it was very easy. I have now achieved the impossible, and between Monday last and yesterday drummed the opera into the heads of two of the most unmusical of women singers and made a first orchestral rehearsal possible. The consequence is that I am completely out of humour and my soul wallows in emptiness and inanity. Add to this that I have let all my love-affairs grow cold, that I have played and lost consistently so that I have no money, and, worst of all, am in the thick of the composition of a *Symphony* about which I have already written to Pohlenz and which I simply cannot finish[2]! Before God, I know of only one thing to end this misery—and that is if you could come to me at once and could stay a week or so in my fine big apartments. I suppose it cannot be, for there are difficulties involved both here and with you, devil take them! Moreover, I have

[1] Wagner was kapellmeister here to Director Bethmann's company. The latter then took him to Magdeburg.

[2] This E- major symphony was never finished.

no right to talk to you like this, for when I compare your letters with mine I am bound to feel very much ashamed. But can there be comparisons between us? You, by the grace of God, fortunate and independent, your feet planted on your own land, possessing everything from the outset which *may* come to others in the future, and I—well, if my pride (which begins to hold up its head again at this comparison!) did not forbid, I should probably make myself out worse than I deserve, for I am just in the mood now to find nothing good about me. I will see how I look to myself to-morrow afternoon—I must go to rehearsal now. Adieu!

15th Sept.

This time I really will go on with my letter, although I have lately abandoned many such beginnings. I am in a brighter mood too, so I will write in red ink.—I have just had a letter from my mother which says much about you. I am glad that you were there a few times. She thinks you are changed, altered for the better; you live much in Ermlitz; you would like to come to see me and I need only write you a word. Here, then, I write you a hundred. Do come! Come in about a week, and stay a week in my lodgings, two rooms, of which one has six windows—and go back to Leipzig with me at the end of the month. *Do* do this! Perhaps then I shall be able to explore that heavenly neighbourhood in your company; it would do me good to spend the last of the fine season sharing reminiscences with you in such a paradise before coming back again to the vile flat north for the Magdeburg *Bluthochzeit*.[1] I enjoyed the opera yesterday. It went very well and was uncommonly well received. * * * I am fearfully busy and occupied—to-morrow we tackle *Adlers Horst*[2] again. You will come just in time for it. For the moment I am pretty free of any love-affairs,—I have no time for them—but I keep up with Toni a little. *Ach, du lieber Gott*, that's all there is to it. It's true I am indulging in sweet dreams at present, for to-morrow is pay-day. But, my God, how prosaic it all is! Come to me and warm me up! * * * I thought at first I was disposed to write—but I feel I am not. I am not living at all. I haven't read a newspaper since I have been here. The new English Cabinet can play the most foolish pranks without arousing my ire, but what of it? What is Schlesier doing? I hope you go about with him a lot. Give him greeting from me. How is the French Revolution getting on, and,

[1] This is not (theatrically) explainable. There is no such opera. A reference to the *Pariser Bluthochzeit* = the Massacre of St. Bartholomew? "Bluthochzeit" = Bloody Festival or Wedding.

[2] Opera by Franz Gläser.

as a pendant to that, how is your *Columbus*? And what am I about that I ask you all these questions? What has it all to do with me? Can I help it that Schlesier exists? Can I do anything for the French Revolution? Can I do anything for your *Columbus*? "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee, thou art translated!"[1] Praise be, I have got a little foolishness off my chest and now I am uncommonly happy and merry! Come and see me, remember me to wife and child, honour your father and mother, and may God give me His blessing. Adieu! * *

I promised Schlesier to write. Show him this letter so that he can see why I do not write to him and how bored I am!

10. TO THE SAME

[Rudolstadt, 20*th September*,[2] 1834.]

The tears are almost running down my cheeks—I am as unhappy as one can possibly imagine. You saw no more than the shadow of me when I visited you last. (At this very moment—it shows the remarkable sympathy between us—I receive a letter from you, but I will not open it till I have told you of the emotion which forced me to write to you, lest new impressions should distract me.) I have been reading in Laube[3] about Verona, about Vicenza and its Palladio—oh, the bitter longing to unburden myself of what I carry within me is almost killing me! How negligent, how immeasurably indolent, I have been! Sunk in my miserable little affairs, I am no higher up now than I was years ago. Oh, the shame of it! Oh, this wretched world! I am handicapped with a ton's weight even in my own ordinary activities, for the business side of our theatre is scandalously mismanaged. I have been unable to do a thing since I came back as the whole personnel of the opera is away. Sickening waste of time, feeble efforts to work off my energies, chained to a miserable existence—if I had money I would take over the management of the theatre if only to get something *done*! Still no prospect of Italy! There must be a change, and I am now going to attack my new opera [*Das Liebesverbot*[4]] with firm resolution and keep at it till I have made a speedy end of it; it must be ready for production before Easter. I must summon up all my powers and try to stifle my pain and misery or I shall come to ruin. You will never see me again as you saw me last, I shall stagnate unless

[1] Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III. Scene i.

[2] 26 December, 1834, the date affixed by the first editor, cannot possibly be correct.

[3] A sketch entitled "Romeo" which first appeared in the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* and was reprinted in *Moderne Charakteristike*, vol. i. (Mannheim, 1835).

[4] *The Ban on Love* (*The Novice of Palermo*).

I put forth all my powers though I burst! God! I am already over twenty-one, and no farther, scarcely, than when I was eighteen! Oh, let us but get to Italy and may God give us strength! (I will open your letter now.)

"We bewail your fortune, Master." [1] Oh, unhappy man, how I pity you! I may well dispense comfort to you out of my good fortune! I should like to play a mad prank. If I had money I would get control of the theatre here and produce *Columbus* and *Die Feen*, let the finances go to the devil, and then do away with myself! Finish your *Columbus* and come here, come! That is all I look to for comfort. Something must happen or I shall pine away.——I shall have something to tell you later about the sympathy between our two letters! Marvellous!

I am,

RICHARD WAGNER.

II. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *27th October*, 1834.

* * * I have much to annoy me now, not, it is true, in Magdeburg, but in Leipzig. As for the business of my opera I am sick to death of the whole concern, and if an end is not made of the matter soon I shall take the score [*Die Feen*] [2] away from under these people's very noses. I am coming to Leipzig about November 9th, and if I see then that they are not in earnest about it I shall take my opera to Magdeburg and have it produced here. Have you ever been in Magdeburg? I like it here—a big town with a wide street and some 50 to 60 thousand inhabitants commands respect. And *what* inhabitants!—nothing but royal Prussians! I have scarcely begun to practise my art again yet because my trunk did not come, but it arrived to-day and I am at it again. So you see that everything in the history of art depends upon a trunk.

Ah, with what rapture I recall my journey with you! You can have no idea how much good it does me to think about it. Peevish as you often were, and I too very much so now and then, all that was completely outweighed by the many incidents of the expedition and by the atmosphere which lay over it all.* * * Those homecomings to Teplitz at dusk filled me with a sense of poetry which remained with me for a long time. What could equal my comical relations with the Raymanns, those singular frolics at the "Black Horse," the trip to Görkau and the divine idleness at Karlsbad? But it is not so much these details as the whole, the blessed unconstraint of it all, that leaves so fair an impression upon the memory. And this was no more than six weeks in Bohemia,

[1] Quotation from Apel's *Columbus*? [2] *The Fairies.* (TRANS.)

while I am now contemplating a few years in Italy. Yes, my dearest Theodore, my plan is now fixed and irrevocable. My *Feen*, by being performed at three or four good theatres, is to give honourable advertisement in advance to my *Liebesverbot*, which I am now completing. I shall make a hit with this opera and win fame and money. If I am fortunate enough to acquire both I shall take them both, and you too, to Italy without fail in the spring of 1836. In Italy I shall then compose an Italian opera, and according as that goes, others too. Then, brown and strong, we shall go on to France. In Paris I shall compose a French opera—and God knows where I shall be then! *Who* I shall be, I know, certainly no longer a German Philistine! This is my career, and it must be yours, too! The only thing that can upset the plan is misfortune, which is as much as to say lack of fortune, but I have decided once for all to build on my luck.

7th November.[1]

I have just received your lines and with a couple of affectionate words you have dragged me out of all my despondency. The sense of friendship really is a wonderful thing!—You see that I too wanted to write to you, but stopped short at the good resolution. All kinds of stupidity have brought you to this. I am always thinking with real anxiety of you and the ill-bred horde of Philistines that surrounds you, and of your family affairs which will bring you to your grave one of these days, it seems to me. I take it as a special kindness of Heaven that you are at last coming to me. True it is I rather prefer the people and environment in which I move to yours; these merry comedians possess a spirit of poetry and imagination all their own which I often find refreshing, and if I had anything to complain of it would simply be that poetry is becoming hard labour to me. But taking it as a whole it is just a comedy, a narrow circle which with all its gay figures has no trace of the thing that unites *us* so magically. We will discuss plans for your visit to me by word of mouth in Leipzig. Next Wednesday I shall come to you for a day or two. Give me a good welcome! * * *

Laube is well off. He is in prison in Berlin and is not allowed to read, write or smoke.

12. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *Sunday* [*7th December*, 1834].

You have done capital work * *,—I am amazed at it,—you have exceeded all my expectations! This must be the first time you have

[1] Wagner writes December instead of November.

heard anything like this from me, for you know I am chary of praise. —I have always been restrained with you, now I can no longer be so! Every page brought fresh tears of joy and emotion to my eyes. I recognise something quite remarkable in your *Columbus*. You know how deeply I entered into, assimilated and sympathised with your idea. I know now what to think of you and am prepared to argue it with anyone—you have accomplished something great. It does not matter to whom you show it—show it to the whole world—have it printed and you will give pleasure to everyone who comes to know it. It far surpasses expectation. Wherever I open it I find proof of your talent and an amazing maturity, astonishingly rapidly attained. I and my friend [Dr. Ziegert] enjoyed ourselves yesterday like children; we read many scenes two or three times over and pointed out their beauties to each other. Most of all I am transported by the colourful, forceful brevity which strikes one everywhere, the lovely poetical light over the whole, the excellent delineation of character and the many individual master-strokes. I see the thing before me like a new and beautiful star, fallen into this everyday life of ours to enchant us all. * * *

I cannot praise your diction enough, it is so simple, noble and unaffected, so free from any straining after effect. * * * I am struck by your scenic adroitness and the consequent excellence of the close of the third act. The beginning of the fourth act quite carried me away. * * *. What can I say to you?—when, in the fifth act, Vincent enters to Columbus with "Columbus, light of my soul, the day has broken," and they sail away certain of victory, I shouted for joy. An *Overture* is constantly running in my head. * * * *

And must I now consider my own miserable existence, the paltry standing which is all I have achieved so far, and the pitiful necessity of proudly proclaiming that existence glorious, at least to my family? I shall never again know content till I have disentangled myself from every species of folly, and I have to admit that I am myself to blame for a great part—perhaps the greater part of the burden of debt. I have been so ill a judge of my own affairs and got myself into such a slough of debt by all kinds of foolishness that the very thought of it makes my hair stand on end. In the first place the negligence there used to be in the payment of wages has burdened me most heavily, and now, instead of turning to my family, natural vanity holds me back and prompts me to assert my proud independence. Extravagances of many kinds have further involved me. Last time I brought 180 thalers away with me from Leipzig, and they just sufficed to give me a first complete view of my embarrassments. Believe me, I need at least

200 thalers to clear me entirely. I must admit that my own irresponsibility is the guilty cause of much, but disappointed hopes have also played a part in my fate. I will revise my opera. I must now adopt a different attitude, at least to my relatives. Ah, it is horrible! Read me a lecture, I deserve it, and will gladly take it from you. Tell me if you can possibly make a man of me again and rescue me from all this sorrow and wretchedness. I turn to you, God knows, before going to Brockhaus, who would be bound to help. I implore you to take the small sum of 200 thalers and lend it to me; you will at most lose the interest, for I cannot possibly offer you that, but I pledge you wholly the happy and vigorous temper which will be mine when you have freed me. Before the famous spring of 1836 I will certainly be out of debt to you—be assured of that! It hurts me and shames me deeply to have to enclose such very different matter in a letter that began as this did. For the rest, do not be anxious, do not be prevented from visiting me at the time arranged by fear of finding me still in gloom. By then things will have solved themselves by this or some other means. Only don't leave me any longer in uncertainty.

Ah—I breathe again, a heavy weight is off my heart. See, it was in such a state that your *Columbus* found me, and even as I read the title all the fair memories of the summer, all bound up with the Columbus idea, inspired me anew. Yesterday evening and to-day were devoted to your work, and I threw off all my sorrows. You can see from this how deep the impression was. The book is now a part of my life; it refreshes me merely to think of it. * * *

Early to-morrow I shall give the book to the manager, Schmale, and let you know at once what happens—there is no need at all to doubt that it will be produced. I have not so far said a word of my opera,—I am too crushed and am unwilling to think of myself and my affairs. * * *

13. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *13th December* [1834].

* * I * * * received your letter yesterday afternoon—it found me again as unfortunate as ever. I will tell you more some time later. I have got erysipelas of the face, am disfigured and neglected. *Columbus* can hardly be produced before Boxing Day, so, if you approve, it will be in the first half of January. Write at once to Schmale about the copying, etc. I wish you had not given *Columbus* first to my uncle [Adolf Wagner], the old pedant. And don't invite criticism so pedantically and formally. Say to them, "Come, read

and enjoy my *Columbus.*" My uncle's opinion must in any case be very favourable. Oh, I should have written long ago to my sister [Rosalie] and amazed and delighted her with your *Columbus,* but I simply must have a letter from you first, for my present pecuniary difficulties are so urgent that, if I do not get a "Yes" from you, I must look elsewhere without delay. Tuesday is the fatal day which I have named as the latest to my creditors. Only think, I owe Schmitt (Rüpel), poor fellow, about 30 thalers from Rudolstadt days, and then wine bills, tailors' bills (for such as we can get no credit here), the accursed rabble of Jews, besides other cash debts, the consequences of my bad habits of life, they all press upon me together, so that I must implore you to hasten to fulfil your ready offer to send me the sum at once. * * * I am so dejected that I have never told you that my *Liebesverbot* has long been finished. I am cutting quills again. God grant I am soon in a mood to start work with a clear brain! * * *

14. TO THE SAME

[MAGDEBURG], *24th December,* 1834.

Now, my golden lad, once more a few words to you, but only a few now and more soon! Thanks, thanks, a hundred thousand thanks and no more! I breathe, I come to life again, and I promised to present you with my first happy mood!

To-morrow your *Columbus* goes to the copyist * * * so that it may be performed in about a fortnight. Bethmann is very pleased with the project. Now you must not be afraid of laying out a few groats on details of outfit; you might like some fine settings and so forth;— and I am sure you will not, for you must wish to have the thing go as finely and impressively as possible. The overture will also be finished, in spite of the fact that I have another "*Festspiel*" [1] to compose for New Year's Day.[2] * * * *

15. TO THE SAME

[MAGDEBURG, *27th December,* 1834.]

You have sent me a piece of your life and long shall you wait ere it is reunited to you. So, to make an end of the matter, come here as soon as you can. Affairs stand with *Columbus* as when last I wrote to you; Ludwig Maier will be here at the New Year—he must be given the part of "Vincente Pinzon"—so we will wait to

[1] Music composed for a festival occasion. (TRANS.)

[2] A cantata entitled *Beim Antritt des neuen Jahres* (The Coming of the New Year), published 1914 in *Musikalische Werke,* vol. xvi. See No. 15.

distribute the rôles till he is present. Listen now—by New Year's Day—that is next Thursday—you too must be present, for it will no doubt amuse you to hear performed a "*Festspiel*," composed by me and written by Schmale. I am so busy over it now that I hardly know what to begin on next. There are five numbers in all, a big overture, which I did in 1½ hours, and choruses and allegorical pieces, which I composed in a morning, for I did not get my commission till the day before yesterday. So, badly as it ought to turn out, I have fumed over it so that it has turned out well. I have now only the instrumentation to do. Please come then for New Year's Day; you will find it amusing here and you might, perhaps, be bored where you are.

16. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *Sunday* [*8th February*, 1835].

Your patience is greatly tried, old fellow, but what can one do when the precious board of works declares authoritatively that the settings will not be finished by Thursday? We were in doubt whether to postpone the performance for one day, but Friday is a bad day for the theatre, what with superstition and Magdeburg society. We had much better postpone it at once till Monday, which is absolutely the best day for the theatre, especially for drama, and the performance can only improve by so slight a delay. Don't despair about it at any rate, and amuse yourself as best you can on the rack during the interval—it would nevertheless be a better plan if you were to come here. There will be rehearsals at the theatre from Wednesday. Last Tuesday we had *La Muette* [*de Portici*, by Auber] and at last we have restored the prestige of our opera. People were so struck by the success of this opera that nothing else is talked of in Magdeburg. It is to be repeated to-day. Everyone, I would have you know, pulled well together, and Minna herself joined in the chorus singing.—Now, just a little patience and don't bite my head off, do you hear?

17. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, 31*st March* [1835].

You must have been long awaiting a letter from me, but I could scarcely muster spirit enough to write even a few business letters to Pohlenz. Oh, I am immeasurably unhappy, and the worst misery is that I don't know why! A general apathy, a mood that I could only call the most horrible indifference if I were not unfortunately already at odds with my whole environment, an indescribable sense of anxiety and fear of some ill-hap, overpowers me. * * *

Yesterday I sent the voice parts and score of my *Columbus Overture* to Leipzig. I cannot be at the rehearsal, which grieves me, and I have no special eagerness to be at the performance, which I don't much care about—that indifference of which I told you! Of course you know the *Overture*, so tell people how they ought to do it. If I don't come tell me faithfully about the performance and its reception. Make a bit of a noise about it. Then—and this is most important—don't forget to go to Kistner and to Messrs. Breitkopf Härtel and tell them about the performance of my *Overture* in and case they should care to have it printed in my name. But let me know about that, too, won't you?

In your letters you say over and over again, "Things are going very well with me, better than you think," and I am ashamed of my premature consolations. But things are bad with me, more altogether disgusting than you think—psychically—psychically! Oh, my poor soul!—I like to think of you as of summer and warm weather! I have got myself into a beautiful scrape, too! Oh, my poor soul! Oh, I got out of bed the wrong side to-day. * * *

18. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *8th April* [1835].

* * * * Your letter and your declaration of affection, infinitely kindly and friendly, both touched and cheered me yesterday. From my soul I thank you for your love, my dear lad—God knows I return it! * * * See, a tear has fallen on the paper—I am a soft fellow! I have much, for I have a friend, and the good God will surely give the rest, too!

Your inquiry as to how things are going here strikes heavily on my heart. It is certain now that I shall leave here by May 1st, for, firstly, Bethmann would produce no opera during the three coming summer months, and, secondly, even if he wished to do so it could not be, his finances are in such confusion. I have spent the last three weeks now without a brass farthing in my pocket—it is a scandal! I will try to settle my affairs here and then go for a time to Leipzig and finish my opera [*Das Liebesverbot*] there. (The performance of two duets from it has aroused my fairest hopes for it.) What shall you do next? Probably you will travel? *Ach Gott, ach Gott*, my whole soul relaxes blissfully when I think of travel—but I am held fast to the futilities of some fixed locality or other as by bands of iron! I shall have an inane life in Leipzig, that I can see beforehand, but I look forward to the near future quite without joy and only think of the more distant with pleasure,—sometimes,

though, with dread! God, supposing the sunshine of Italy is to remain but a northern mist for me! It would be too horrible!——

Laube is free, at least from jail, but he is still a prisoner for he has got to go to Liegnitz! * * *

I feel in a very good humour with you this month, so I send you kind messages from Minna, the dear child, and will overlook your hopeless *naïveté* about her and me; she is as fresh as ever, but pale, sometimes! * * *

19. TO THE SAME, FRANKFORT-ON-MAIN

LEIPZIG, *6th June*, 1835.

* * * Ah, these cursed cares and worries, they have overwhelmed me and turned my hair prematurely white! As a matter of fact I am well now, and your affectionate trust has made me better still. Surely you saw, dear heart, that I never doubted it, only forgive me the least little scruple too—I am still unclear about some things, but I *am* clear that you possess the most amiable nature in the world and that I recognise it as my most precious acquisition, provided I possess it wholly and it is wholly given to me.

I am at peace, at work and industrious—and I am doing well at it, too. The *Columbus Overture* was lately performed at Gerhardt's concert. It was applauded, but did not appear especially to please the clique which composed the chief part of the public that particular evening. I was dissatisfied with the performance. I conducted myself and I simply could not get any fire into the people—the close dragged again as it did in Magdeburg. The overture pleased your mother, if she meant what she said. I have a detestable opposition here; the unprejudiced are with me pretty well to a man, but the highest circles are diametrically opposed to me, and I was glad to have this opportunity of teaching them a lesson; they belong to the Stegmayer-Hauser clique. I had intended to pipe up with my opera [*Das Liebesverbot*] for the first time here, but I will have it translated into French, revised by Scribe, and produced at the *Opéra Comique*; that's where it belongs, and away out of Germany is where *I* belong. So [I] will come back to Magdeburg in the autumn—it is the shortest way out! Woe is me! Things are going well; the committee has taken over the theatre, appointed Bethmann as salaried director and guaranteed salaries; that ought to do. I am now going to a festival of music at Dessau, then to Magdeburg for a few days, from there to Naumburg and Kösen, where I shall stay a fortnight or so with Laube. I read his *Love Letters*[1] with great pleasure—they refreshed me. Better prospects all round!

[1] Stories published under this title in 1835.

Minna came here and stayed here three days in bad weather for my sake without knowing a single other soul and without any other object than just to please me. That sort of thing is touching, —it is remarkable what an influence I have gained over the girl. You should read her letters—they are all fire and, as we both know, that is not her nature. She sends you greeting. * * * *

* * * I have resolved to become a complete Epicurean as regards my art; nothing for posterity, but everything for my contemporaries and the moment; if I get a thorough hold on these, posterity will follow of itself—but I shall take no notice of it. * * *

20. TO THE SAME, HEIDELBERG

LEIPZIG, 16*th July*, 1835.

* * * * I have been travelling the last five weeks and am still doing so. Listen! Besides other expeditions I visited Kösen in particular for a time, and saw Laube. Oh, how rottenly and shabbily that man Schlesier has treated Laube![1] Just suppose that *I* were *now* utterly to betray you and your friendship to me in the most dastardly fashion and desert you like a coward, and you may have some idea of Schlesier's guilt. The fact that in spite of this Laube judges him so mildly, makes me think highly of *him*. He smilingly declares him half crazy and that is all!

I have been in Magdeburg and there my immediate fate has again been decided. Affairs at the theatre have now taken the best of turns. Upon the representations of Frank, the mayor, the King has promised his support and continuance of the same on condition that the management is in trustworthy hands. The committee has now undertaken this and you can believe me when I tell you that the matter is established on a completely secure and honourable basis. All arms are open to me and I have closed with the committee again on condition of a *higher* salary, and more complete power over the opera. This should open in September, and I am now travelling on behalf of the theatre to book singers. Much has been entrusted to me and I am now myself answerable for everything. I like to have to rely on myself alone and to see things so completely in my own hands. Dear Theodore, ought I really to drag on this miserable existence in Leipzig? By God, no!—not even though it involve the greatest of sorrows—parting from you! I leave to-morrow for Teplitz, Karlsbad, Prague, Vienna, etc. * * * *

[1] Cf. chapter, "Gustav Schlesier. A Renegade," in H. H. Houben's *Jung-deutscher Sturm und Drang*, pp. 595 *et seq.* (Leipzig, 1911).

21. TO HIS MOTHER, JOHANNA GEYER, LEIPZIG

KARLSBAD, *25th July*, 1835.

It is you alone, dearest Mother, whom I think of with the most heartfelt love, the deepest emotion. I know well enough that brothers and sisters go their own ways—each thinks of himself and his own future and affairs connected with these. It *is* so, and I feel it myself. When we meet we approach each other from the business standpoint—we have become a concourse of friendly diplomats; we are silent when it seems to us politic—we speak when in our view matters demand it—and we speak most when we are away from each other. Oh, how far above all this is the love of a mother! I am one of those who cannot always speak as the heart prompts at the moment—otherwise you would often have learned to know a much softer side of my nature. But the emotions are there all the same, and see, Mother, now that I am away from you, I am so overcome by feelings of thankfulness for that wonderful love of your child which you have once again shown him with such heartfelt warmth, that I want to write and speak of them to you in the tenderest tones of a lover to his beloved. Ah, but more than these, for is not the love of a mother far more—far purer—than any other? No, I don't wish to philosophise here, I will only thank you again and again, and I should like to recount each separate proof of the love for which I thank you—were there not too many of them. Yet well I know that no heart broods over me with such utter sympathy, with such care, as does yours—indeed, it is perhaps the only one that watches my every step—and not indeed coldly to criticise, no, but to follow me with your prayers. Were you not always the only one to remain unchangeably true to me when others, judging merely by outward results, sagely turned their backs on me? I should indeed be uncommonly arrogant if I were to expect a like love from all—I know that is impossible, I know it well. With you it all springs from the heart, from your dear kind heart, and may God ever preserve its inclination towards me, for I know that if all forsook me, it would be my last and dearest refuge. Oh, Mother, if you were to die too soon, before I can give you full proof that it is upon a worthy and immeasurably grateful man that you have bestowed so much love! No, it could not be, you must yet live to enjoy many sweetnesses! Ah, when I think of these last eight days of our intercourse! It is perfect balm to me, true refreshment, to recall to my soul each aspect of your loving-kindness! My dear, dear Mother, what a wretch were I if I could ever grow cold towards you!

For the future I shall not give you much news of my doings —those of you who judge by outward results will find out about

RICHARD WAGNER'S MOTHER

From a water-colour drawing by Auguste Böhm, Leipzig, 1839

them without my help. Whatever comes about I am now independent and intend to be self-sufficient. Oh, this humiliation [1] before Fritz [Brockhaus] has bitten deep into my heart and I am tortured by the bitterest self-reproaches that I ever gave him the right to humiliate me. I will have a complete settlement with him, but I will not be reconciled to him now or ever, and if I am wrong in this matter I prefer to die wrong. I will shun them all utterly. Everybody cannot be right and I was wrong, but I will never admit it to *them* and shall adopt the attitude that I have nothing to admit. My worst sin was to have played into their hands and to have got myself into a position where they had the least right over me. Besides, we are so widely sundered in everything that it would be ridiculous for me to try to be reconciled to him. And yet I am glad about this catastrophe, because it has brought me to full consciousness of the fact that I have nothing to expect of anyone in the world, but must depend entirely upon my own resources. Now at last I feel independent. For what I have lacked, what has made me sleepy and casual, has been just this—a certain undefined, unconscious reliance upon support, foolishly not confined to Apel's, but taking all sorts of other quaint directions, over which I must almost laugh, so great has been my stupidity. I am disillusioned about all that now and am very glad of it. My softness brought these experiences about, and now they will be useful to me in all human relations. All I ask from the outset is that people should deny me their sympathy—it would only annoy me—and may *you*, your heart, your love be my sole refuge, where I may seek comfort and healing at need through the coming years. Mother-love needs no reasons—other loves want to know why they love and therefore become nothing but esteem.

I have been in Teplitz and Prague and found nothing to worry about except the confirmation of my plan of not going to Vienna, but I have found further indications that I ought to continue in the course I have now marked out. Moritz was in Prague and gave me a helping hand in this respect. I wrote from Prague to all the people I have been considering, so that I may know beforehand where I am with them and need make no journey in vain. I expect their answers at Nuremberg, where I go to-morrow or the day after, for I am awaiting only one more letter from Magdeburg, which will conclude my business here. I shall stay in Nuremberg. When the affairs of a theatre are being wound up, one may light upon all sorts of things, and, besides, the Wolframs can give me a lot of information and their judgment may save me many a journey. * * * *

[1] To get money. See *My Life*, p. 127.

22. TO THEODORE APEL, LEIPZIG

FRANKFORT [-ON-MAIN], 21*st August*, 1835.

* * It is true I am on the point of coming to Leipzig and of seeing and talking to you, yet to-day I know no other way of combating the remorseless pressure of sorrow and anxiety—I must write to you to-day—this very hour. The tears stream from my eyes, just as they used to do in my boyhood when I had offended someone I loved and had to ask forgiveness. Theodore, what have I come to? What has become of that free, glorious vitality which we used mutually to kindle in each other? Where is the future we strove for with such a proud assurance of victory? Perhaps it has all come to you—even more beautiful in fulfilment—I don't know, for we have heard nothing of each other for half a year—but I suppose it, I hope it, I wish it. You have found a better friend, a friend you can respect more, prize more, one who must be more to you than your old Richard! Oh, I can write no more for tears—why do I still give way to this over-sensibility! I have been to Teplitz again, Theodore, and kept a sorrowful anniversary there. I have been in Prague again, too, and there spoke with the mistresses of Count Baar and Baron Bethman—whom we used to know by the names of Jenny and Auguste [Raymann]. I have been in Karlsbad, too—and oh, I have been in Würzburg! My girl [Friederike Galvani] had in the meantime been confined—a country bumpkin had been my fortunate rival! Theodore, Theodore, how my luck has left me since you left me! Oh for one only sign that Fortune still favours me, and I would try to woo life again! I have lost sight of everything—everything—poetry flees from me and a desert of worthless truth stretches endlessly before me! My God, I feel as if all the flowers of youth vanish before me, as if this chill life crowns my temples like a frost, forbidding all warmth and love! Oh, can it be that I have already enjoyed all that I am destined to enjoy? Is my life over? Yes, yes—I have sinned—and yet I have not! Does one sin when one is mad? I have fallen out with my family and must believe our relationship dissolved—I have even brought things to this pass! I know Leipzig no more—I shall never be there again for any length of time! All that I have left me is a mother who loves me dearly—naught else! Theodore—have I still a friend? Have I still your love, your trust? Oh, tell me, tell me, what do you think of me? To lose so noble, so splendid a spirit means much—to me it means that all is lost! If you too were to misjudge me!—and, by God, Theodore, it would not be impossible, for it would need an immense staunchness on your side, and from your point of view,

not to wonder what to make of me!—Ah, I must feel all that, and yet can only turn back to you! If you cast me off, then farewell, fair world!

Ah, what a relief—I have wept my eyes out—I have not been able to do that for a long time—the tears gushed forth like a splendid reviving thunder-shower after long drought and heat. I am a little calmer now and will write to you more calmly. Up to now I have badly mismanaged my life. My dearest, I was not wicked, I was mad; that is the only way I can express my conduct —it was a madness about the conventions! I see now only too well that money is no chimera, no despicable, worthless non-essential. I have become convinced that money has become as truly a living entity as the social organism of which a man is perforce a member. I was mad, I say, because I did not understand myself and my relation to the world. I knew that I had not the slightest assured support or stay, and yet behaved like a lunatic, exceeded my means in every direction, with in addition all the ignorance and inexperience of a man who has never had any solid title to money! No one, not even the rich, throw money away as I did. The result has been a regular maelstrom of perplexity and misery, the complexities of which I can only view with dismay. I simply cannot reckon up the details clearly; it is unheard of and inexplicable into what an abyss I have fallen. Your great and incessant efforts to save me from it only made me the bolder and brought me to trust in a blind something, of which I could give myself no clear account, but which clouded my eyes ever more and more. My life in Leipzig, the wretched position I occupied there, was an intolerable burden to me. It drove me to exhibitions of strength and independence, so called. I broke out into extravagant pranks, the result of which, added to the persistent aftermath of earlier follies, was a complete break with my family and, finally, a rupture with all my circle. What my better self, the artistic genius in me, suffered through all this, is inexpressible! * * * If I could be free now of all the consequences of my perpetual follies, I could face my fate calmly. I have now assured a safe and sound provision for my immediate future, and with the fruits of these experiences and the conviction won therefrom that I must henceforth depend on myself and my own strength in order to redeem the past, I can now hope to walk in a new way. But I cannot visit Magdeburg again till I have got rid of a burden of debt amounting to 400 thalers. That is my position—abandoned by and separated from everyone, everyone on whom I might otherwise count, only still followed by my mother's painful anxiety—and she can give me nothing. *You* are the only one to whom I can

still appeal, and I dare to tell you this without fear of angering you and making you turn from me * * *. Do not think of our present situation as a mere chance of life—see it as an *event* of the greatest importance in your life and mine, and indeed it is that, it is my second birth. Believe that if my spirit should some day blossom richly and fully (I despair of it at the moment), it shall not be concealed from the world who rescued it. * * *

* * * I have made my confession—it is for you to give absolution. I hope I may be able to leave here to-morrow, and I shall come to you a day after this letter. How will you receive me? I ought to arrive in Magdeburg on the 28th of this month. It depends on you whether I can do so![1] * * *

23. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *22nd September* [1835].

* * * The other day, struck by a sudden thought, I felt I must write and charge you with having overlooked a highly poetical trait in your *Columbus*. I read somewhere that Columbus, tired out by the endless vexations of the Spanish Court, would long before have attempted to leave Spain, but for a love-affair which detained him and most poetically and romantically supported him in his oppressed condition; that, strengthened in the arms of love, he perpetually renewed his capacity to endure and to do, so that when the futilities of the Court threatened to break his spirit he would go to Cordova and embrace his sweetheart, who, for her part, gave a brave and enthusiastic love to the brave and enthusiastic adventurer, despite his greying hairs, and bore him a son, Fernando. She kept him fast in Spain and gave him renewed strength to accomplish his task, so that love rather than politics gave Spain the glory of the discovery. A glorious love! Love gives me more strength than all the concepts of morality. A high-flown, sentimental mistress would enervate me now, but mine makes me glad and gay. On all sides *renunciation* leers at me now; who wants to embitter this *one delight* for me?[2]

I am always extending my activities now. I write for money. I have now become a contributor to the new musical journal.[3] If I break down, God's will be done. I weep no more. I shall never go to Leipzig again. What is Mendelssohn doing? * * *

[1] Apel helped again.
[2] His connection with Minna Planer.
[3] *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, started and edited by R. Schumann.

24. TO THE SAME, ERMLITZ

MAGDEBURG, *2nd October*, 1835.

* * * I have got myself into a terrible whirlpool of work and drudgery here. All our opera-house affairs are hung about my neck. Yesterday at last we got going for the first time with *Zampa* [by Hérold], and the results may really be called considerable. So in this respect I am getting some peace at last. * * *

25. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *11th October*, 1835.

* * * I have trouble enough at present—chiefly bitter ingratitude—to bear. I am learning to know life, God knows! Winter with all its misery is creeping into my very bones again. I am pale and find little pleasure in anything. I am thinking of rehearsing my *Feen* [1] here very shortly. In spite of everything I feel my vigour renewed. * *

26. TO THE SAME, LEIPZIG

MAGDEBURG, *26th October*, 1835.

You will be wondering that you have received no answer from me as yet to your two last letters. I wrote you one immediately with an enclosure for F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and had actually got some oiled linen so as to send him a big parcel of compositions through you (you shall have the letter, already sealed, when next you are here), but I changed my mind entirely and sent you nothing, for I am now taking leave, once and for all, of the concert-hall. I may perhaps even not take your advice that I should send a good overture to Leipzig. I don't want to be anyone's hanger-on, and your reports of Mendelssohn have finally dissuaded me. Adieu, ye solid splendours, I give myself up to the tinsel of the stage! I am now a composer of operas only, and am casting myself, body and soul and all my hopes, into my opera [*Das Liebesverbot*], at which I am hard at work now. The practice of this art absorbs me now entirely, and during the short time I have been back here I have been well rewarded therefor. I am now entirely responsible for the opera here and have just luckily discovered and brought to light a couple of young talents who will let the theatrical world hear of them some time. Who would have thought of Minna's sister [Amalie Planer], lost in obscurity at Braunschweig? I engaged the girl for her beautiful alto voice and I have now rehearsed her in Romeo.[2]

[1] See No. 7, note 2, p. 14.

[2] In Bellini's opera *Montecchi e Capuletti*.

Few beginners have made such a sensation as she—people went absolutely mad over her. The opera had to be repeated at once to a house full to bursting, and tears were as plentiful as at a performance by Devrient. I have likewise hunted out a little tenor called Schreiber and am training him to the great satisfaction of the public. That's something to rejoice about! And it's all my work! I am becoming vain as a conductor, too, you see! I am producing my operas promptly and to time. We are rehearsing new operas [1] —*Jessonda* (quite new here!)—*Norma*, *Lestocq* ought to follow upon each other merrily. That is where our unexampled business method comes in——the salaries are paid exactly and punctually. Everything is going well—well! And I delight in being absolute ruler of the opera! Perhaps I shall do as well as Mendelssohn—but I am only in Magdeburg and he is in Leipzig—that's the difference. However, I haven't finished yet! I feel full of vigour! I am not going to bother about Leipzig—I am thinking of attempting something quite different, Berlin, in fact, where I contemplate getting my *Liebesverbot* first produced. More of this anon, but I may just say that I am not hankering in the least after you and your honours.

The 27th.

I was interrupted yesterday. It is noticeable in your last letter that you tend to think our modern ideas need revising. The modern position as regards love, etc., no longer meets with your approval, perhaps never has done. My present *bourgeois* post presses a little heavily on me, too, and I could almost be weak enough to submit again to all sorts of superannuated conceptions, but that my unshakable convictions about the present position of art have a most stimulating effect on my social views. So with my music—I shall never, never acclaim our Germanism again, and your Leipzig with all its classic *gloire* can never drag me back to it. We have stuffed our stomachs with too much rotten matter. It seemed to me very opportune that I should at this moment be busy about a German work again. I am rehearsing *Jessonda*, and how I shy away again from reactionary ideas! The opera fills me once more with utter disgust; the soft Bellini is a veritable Hercules compared with this great, lengthy, pedantic, sentimental Spohr. A little while ago it occurred to me to compose an overture [2] to *Romeo and Juliet*. I was thinking out a rough plan when—would you believe it?—Bellini's stale, insipid overture with its battlefield of a *crescendo*, turned up of itself in my sketch!

Fräulein Haas is very ill. Don't bother your head about Minna

[1] By Spohr, Bellini and Auber. [2] Not extant.

—I am leaving it all to Fate. She loves me and her love is worth very much to me now. She is the pivot of my life, and gives it consistency and warmth. I cannot relinquish her. I only know this, dear Theodore, that you know nothing at all of the sweetness of such a connection. There is nothing low, unworthy or enervating about it. Our Epicureanism is pure and strong—it is not a vulgar *amour*. We love each other and trust each other and leave the rest to Fate. You, of course, know nothing of this and truly only with an actress could one live in such a relationship. This disregard of the ideas of conventional society can only exist where the whole basis of life is imaginative freedom and poetic licence. I have got a nice friendly sitting-room and a splendid grand piano which I got cheap, and with these all would be well if I had not got to live within such horribly strict limits. I don't mean to complain about it, but when I reflect that all this is insufficient to atone for the immediate past, I could rage! You can imagine how penuriously I live when I have to pay off 30 thalers a month—that is really bitter. And now just listen; since you once settled to give me a certain sum, don't leave me in the lurch this first of the month. I reckon on you—else I'm bankrupt—and listen again—if it should be a little more than before I should certainly not complain—you may believe me! Now, we'll see what comes of it—it can't be too much! What a life I'm leading! No, I'm extremely respectable and am getting a heavenly reputation. There are rubs here and there of course, but I'm willing to put up with them if I can make something by it. Haven't I become nice and tame?—and I'm a good conductor, too—deuce take me if I don't flatter myself a little on that head. If I can only get a bit of a name with my opera I shall do well enough. Now write to me and don't take things ill—you know I'm an ass! * * *

27. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *5th November*, 1835.

* * I am in too soft a mood now for harsh and bitter reproaches about your last letter, but it is sad that your remembered image of me is such that you can so misunderstand me and my letters. You must have formed a fine opinion of me, that you can subject every word of mine to unjust criticism. Not only do I divine hardness, perversity and arrogance, but I hold you for a fool. I do not exactly remember now what I wrote—I only know that I must lower my tone now and walk cautiously, since I have found in you a severe critic who will make not even the slightest allowance for my mood! Pardon me if I don't defend myself *en détail* since I cannot feel able

to reproach myself *en gros*. Your doctrinaire mood intimidates me too much altogether. Your letters indeed are only relative, since they are merely criticisms of mine, but I will nevertheless give you something positive.

Minna set off to Berlin early yesterday, and I cannot tell you how I feel. This is not being "in love," it must be *love*. She has gone there to act at another theatre for a time—perhaps she will stay there as she has come much into collision [1] with a Mme. Grabowsky here. As for me—my God, my God, if I wanted to be "modern" this is just the moment for a separation, but there it is—my heart is broken, in regular *bourgeois* fashion, broken. Kindly imagine the rest for yourself—sometime we can *talk* about it. I wish I had a friend with me now—and I have absolutely no one but you—and you, too, my Brutus?! Theodore, I am getting sentimental and can get no farther to-day! My little Magdeburg room? Well, well, "Pardon me the rest, my Prince" (he stops and his eyes fill with tears). The Prince: "Ass, why do you weep?" (*exeunt* both).[2] Humour, humour, old fellow!

You haven't sent the money either—why do you force me to the humiliation of dunning you for what you do not owe me? You promised me something for the first of November and I calculated accordingly. Isn't it possible for you? It is really too *naïf*—at one and the same time I weep for a mistress and dun a friend upon whom I have no claim! Oh, Theodore, Theodore! More soon from your dead friend,

HERR RICHARD WAGNER.

28. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *25th November*, 1835.

Heartiest thanks, dear Theodore—and these less for the matter itself than for your quick and gentle way of settling such things and passing on.

But what the devil are you about with these eternal illnesses of yours? My opinion is that you use your powers too little. Illnesses keep off me pretty well, though often enough there is the smell of the sick-room in my inside. You ought to have seen me during the fortnight that Minna was away from me. Great God, how the girl, without actually intending it, has enslaved me! She has come back for my sake although a brilliant engagement was offered her in Berlin. Furthermore, what do you think? My brother-in-law Wolfram was in Berlin at the same time as she, stayed in the same inn with

[1] Because of quarrels about the casting. Cf. *My Life*, p. 136.
[2] What is the source of this quotation?

her, and was her hourly companion and protector, and he who, inspired by my family, was at first violently prejudiced against her, was so converted by her love for me and her irreproachable bearing, that he writes to me: "Remain true to her; if any woman deserves it, she does!" She made a sensation in Berlin. She has refused more than four offers of marriage made her at short notice. The devil! That touches a man! Do come soon and see us. You will meet a better opera company here than you are likely to see for many a day. They really are a joy! Three kissable women singers, Mme. Pollert of Petersburg, a young and intellectual woman with large eyes—a heavenly voice, a finished singer and artistic genius; Fräulein Limbach, eighteen years old, wonderfully beautiful, young, full voice; Amalie Planer, with a splendid alto voice and a magnificent delivery * * * and then two tenors, Freimüller, the idol of our public, voice, delivery and dramatic force, and Schreiber, a young and remarkably good-looking little fellow, twenty years of age, with a melting high tenor voice. Krug is the bass singer—he was formerly in Leipzig and has now developed amazingly. Now, I tell you it really is splendid, and if I had not already decided so firmly to have my opera [*Das Liebesverbot*] produced first in Berlin at the Königstadt, I would certainly do it here, for I could cast it excellently.

Bring your new work with you, I am really most excited about a comedy and romance of yours. I am unbelievably industrious now and have actually only three more big numbers of the opera to work on. It will be ready for production by the end of January. Give me something soon—write—we will celebrate it riotously. Laube has written two new books—one a novel, *Die Schauspielerin*. I am extremely fond of Laube, he is the kind of man one meets seldom now—he has a brain and a heart—he is a delightful fellow.* * *

29. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, *27th December*, 1835.

This time you may again accuse me, Theodore, of not having written to you for a long time. It sounds almost absurd to excuse myself by saying that I have not had time. Yet in a sense it is so. My God, what haven't I been working at! First there is my job that often robs me of every spare hour for weeks together, and then there is the composition of my opera which I shall have finished by New Year's Eve. I am now at the focus of my talent, I do everything with ease and success. As regards the production I have now made up my mind. It will do well here at the end of February '36. In

many respects I could nowhere produce the opera more advantageously than here, with two excellent tenors and an Isabella such as I could *seldom* better, our real genius of a Pollert. She has no name in Germany as yet, because she comes from Petersburg, but she will soon draw tears from all your eyes. So I shall produce my *Liebesverbot* for the first time here, get Cornet from Braunschweig, Cerf from Berlin and Ringelhardt from Leipzig for the occasion, and then, please God, I launch my opera. That is my scheme of *opera*-tions!

I live here as if in prison—oh, things must change soon—this *bourgeois* effort and struggle to keep body and soul together must end soon. You have no idea what this sort of thing is like, dear Theodore. I know it now and when it is over I shall pride myself on it a little. I have no spirit for that at present. Enough of this, you will not feel it. Only this much more. Let anyone come now and turn up his nose at my love for Minna and I will bash it in for him! God knows how and what I should be without her now! This simple intimation may suffice you—I will leave the rest to your imagination! I am writing this letter at her desk. Love upon love, I am with her and writing to you. * * * *

Laube is going to Berlin for the winter. I am very pleased with the preface to the second volume of his *Charakteristiken*. You often ask after Schmale; he left here a long time ago. You would hardly know our theatre again—everything is new but good. If we keep together for a time we are bound to attract attention. * * *

30. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, 21*st January*, 1836.

You wanted to come to me for the first weeks of this year; why don't you come? * * * Not a drop of wine has passed my lips for eight weeks. I stay at home and work and——the composition of my opera was complete by New Year's Eve, and I now work at the instrumentation all night long! My opera is to be produced at the end of February—I am to get the takings of the second night as honorarium. Come and hear what I have to expect—you only know the weakest so far! Between now and then, however, I perish. I have struggled on five months, but it is no longer possible—I am being ruined. My creditors will not be put off by talk of my opera. I must have money, if I am not to go distracted and if the few thalers which I save each time from my salary are not to be taken away by distraint! Oh, how can I make you see all this? You only know of such wretchedness by hearsay! Don't give me anything,

but buy up the receipts for my opera. If you have faith you are just the one who has nothing to fear by that. I estimate the value at 100 thalers—will you give me so much for it? The sale is in good faith, and I only apply to you because I think I have the right to expect of you the greatest trust in the result. If I don't get the money within the month I dare not appear here any more. It is too maddening and more than I am able to bear. If you wanted to prove me—well, then, I have done and suffered what is humanly possible for five months—but more is *not* possible!

Forgive me for filling my letter up with this, but when this common misery oppresses me I have no mind left for intellectual interests. I don't know what to write to you about—arts seem to me foolish and trifling. I write to no one and you are the only one to whom I can write like this. My family know nothing, they have cut me off from them. Besides yours, I know only one true heart and without *that* [Minna's] I should already have perished. * * *

31. TO THE SAME

[MAGDEBURG], *26th* [*March* 1836].

* * Everything is stale and flat to me. You have such great interests now that mine must seem small. To-morrow, Sunday, is the first night [1] of my opera, Tuesday the second and last because our opera closes on April 1st. It rests with you whether you hear it or not. You do really enjoy music. You know every detail of Mendelssohn's—so give me only a morsel of your notice.[2] * * *

32. TO FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY, LEIPZIG

MAGDEBURG, *11th April*, 1836.

I * * * ask you to accept as a present [3] from me the accompanying *Symphony*, written when I was eighteen years old. * * * I ask for nothing in return but that you should glance over it in some idle hour or other. Perhaps it may serve to give you an indication of my honest efforts and industry. * * *

33. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG

DEAREST FRIEND! MAGDEBURG, *19th April*, 1836.

I send you herewith a kind of report on Magdeburg. There is not much to be said and on the whole I have not said much. I have

[1] The first performance did not take place till the 29th. There was no second. The *Liebesverbot* was not performed again till 24 March, 1923, when it was rescued from oblivion in Munich.

[2] Apel did not come.

[3] Cf. *Mein Leben*, p. 1011 (note 77).

once mentioned you—if you do not like my article alter it as you wish. With the best will I could not altogether avoid speaking somewhat of my own personality—in any case I was bound to be cited as musical director in any report of musical life in Magdeburg. Secondly, it would be absurd to put an undeserved slight on myself, and, thirdly, my special reason for writing about my opera [*Das Liebesverbot*] is that no one else does and I much wish that it should be discussed. It is tragic that one is forced to help oneself! Otherwise I think I have not said too much about myself. Nevertheless, I think you will find that my name had better not be mentioned to anyone, else woe is me!

I shall probably soon see you in Leipzig, and God knows I rejoice thereat. The people here are nothing but so much filth!

Adieu, my dearest Schumann.* *

34. TO THEODORE APEL, LEIPZIG

MAGDEBURG, 20*th April*, 1836.

* * You might very soon send me just a keg of '34. I am still in debt to the chorus here for a promised glass of wine ever since my opera was produced and I cannot afford any. That is to say, I ask you only if it doesn't put you to too great expense and inconvenience. * * *

P.S. Both this and your promised visit here must be soon, because I may shortly be in prison [1] and would not then be able to offer you much company. Therefore soon—do you understand?!

35. TO THE SAME

MAGDEBURG, 6*th May* [1836].

The clouds are ever thickening on my horizon. I accept your offer of a refuge at Ermlitz.[2] Give them orders to receive me and assign me a room when I come. * * *

36. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG

BERLIN, 28*th May*, 1836.

DEAREST FRIEND!

I am again sending you something of mine from Berlin for your newspaper.[3] It is not very finished work and has no proper beginning or end, but we can write nothing but aphorisms nowadays. This sketch will just suit Banck. Rellstab is dealt with a little in it—one must give him a home-thrust on occasion. You don't know

[1] For debt. [2] But see No. 37.
[3] It was never printed and is not extant.

what mischief the man is up to here in Berlin. My name must be concealed at all events. I will continue to write something from time to time as *Wilhelm Drach*. It really is a pity that a composer should feel constrained to be a writer too, but so it is with us Germans. One and all we stray into speculative regions—but it certainly is not to our advantage.

Only just a few words more.—I am staying here a few months, and as soon as Gläser begins his leave shall enter into an agreement with Cerf to take over his post in the Königstadt opera for a short time. During my term of office I shall produce my opera [*Das Liebesverbot*] there myself, and if you think it worth an announcement, I ask you to give it a little opportune notice in your paper.

If you like I will send you something more soon. I am almost without employment in the immediate future. If you could let me know of any which would at the same time bring in a little money, I and my purse would be greatly beholden to you. Please do not be offended that I left Leipzig without making you my adieux. I was in a petty situation and wanted to spare you a petty leave-taking. Give my kindest regards to Banck. * * *

37. TO HIS MOTHER, JOHANNA GEYER, LEIPZIG

BERLIN, 31*st May*, 1836.

DEAREST MOTHER,

You must have been long expecting a letter from me, particularly since although you were here we did not see each other. It was not till the evening after your departure that I discovered from Eichberger that you had been here. I heard from Fräulein Gerhard that you stayed here with Mme. Berthold, but I did not quite believe it and thought that if you had really come you would have communicated with Laube, since you could not know where I was living. I went to see Laube; he knew nothing of your arrival and doubted it, too, and then I fell quite out of the clouds when, at last and too late, I learnt of it from Eichberger. So far as I could discover from him, my letter from Magdeburg must have missed you in Leipzig, and that was doubly ill-hearing to me, for you cannot have known that I intended to go to Berlin. Well, ill-luck and misadventure have been and are my portion. I still shudder when I think of it all. My Berlin expedition has at last propitiated my evil star a little. I and Cerf are the warmest friends in the world and embrace whenever we see each other. The man took a liking to me and at once regretted that he had concluded another year's contract with the director of music, Kugler. So the present position is that

Kapellmeister Gläser has long leave of absence in the summer and during this time I temporarily hold his post and salary. During my time at the helm I shall rehearse my opera here and produce it and lay down my office when Gläser returns. I must take on some new engagement for the period immediately following, but by then I hope to hold a contract with Cerf to act for alternating periods as kapellmeister from next year on, while, at the worst, I shall have made myself known here and can withdraw with advantage. Laube and the journalists who work in his interests—such as Glasbrenner, for instance—are making a terrific hue and cry about me as if I were the greatest genius in the world, and you could have read all the news I have given you here just as well in the society papers. It can't be helped, I must try my fortune locally, and this kind of thing is just what I needed. I dare not come to Leipzig — the air there is not good for me. I hope this will reassure you a little, if you need reassurance.

So Clara is with you, the dear, good creature! But how is her husband? In my terrible necessity and despair I wrote to him from Magdeburg, but got no answer. Wohlbrüch is here from Riga. A new theatre is to be built and opened there in the autumn. Perhaps I may go there. But first I want to make a name here! Forgive me —I must go and see my good friend [1] Spontini or the fellow will have the house about my ears with his perpetual visits! He is beside himself because *he* cannot produce my opera. Why has he come too late? *I* can't help him! The King,[2] who is my good friend, has offered me Spontini's post, but what use is it to me? Six journalists want interviews with me this minute. People crowd upon me. I can't endure that much longer, particularly as I haven't a farthing in my pocket. My good friend Theodore Apel, too, sent me a very charming *unfranked* letter at Magdeburg, in which he wrote that building was in progress at Ermlitz and so there was really no room for me there. I think it must have been a new jest out of his latest comedy. Often enough, dear Mother, I have suspected even you a little of having set that fellow on me. I have my reasons for that.

Now, you see how splendidly things are going with your son. Cerf, among others, hardly knows what to do for love of me—he will certainly cut his heirs out of his will and put me there instead. He often weeps out the sorrows of his managership on my bosom. He is an abject fellow, but useful all the same to the man who knows how to manage him. My whole policy at present is directed

[1] This is self-explanatory, as is the bitter jest which follows.
[2] Frederick III. of Prussia.

to getting Gläser to the baths as soon as possible. He must get a thorough chill somehow, for I believe he is not at all intemperate. May God assist me! * * *

38. TO HEINRICH DORN, RIGA

KÖNIGSBERG I PR., *7th August*, 1836.

MOST HONOURED SIR AND FRIEND!

I hope that you may perhaps remember me with the like benevolence which you formerly exercised towards me in a high degree and for which I still feel I owe you the liveliest and most heartfelt gratitude. I can sincerely say that from time to time upon remembrance of you I have been painfully overcome by the thought that I should perhaps never see you again, since you had settled so far away, and I am consequently all the more pleasantly affected now by the knowledge that, being so much nearer to you, I may even entertain the idea of coming nearer still, under certain fortunate circumstances. Since, then, I have touched upon this point at the very beginning of my letter, I will go on without ceremony to mention the matter which, although not the only, was yet the most immediate, occasion of my recalling myself to your recollection and troubling you with these lines. Two years ago, then, I too—enthusiast and *ci-devant* disciple of Beethoven—applied myself to a practical career, during which time I have acted as music director in Magdeburg, and flatter myself that I have so far achieved such a measure of success in this rôle that certain former colleagues of the Leipzig opera wish to acclaim me as their faithful pupil and follower (though I must acknowledge to you in passing that they would be intensely astonished at the radical transformation of my extreme musical opinions). Destiny and desire together have now sent me to Königsberg where I had, as I believed, well-founded claims upon an engagement. As regards the probable unsuccess of these, my sole mistake has been in believing it certain that Herr Schuberth would return to Riga in the autumn. It appears that he no longer has the smallest desire to do this and—God knows what is keeping him—he will remain here. I must now acknowledge that the great distance which I have covered has somewhat embarrassed me, and that I cannot resist looking somewhat hopefully towards Riga. You may perhaps still feel sufficient interest in me to think me worth the little trouble involved in acceding to my request that you will send me a short note saying whether a passable theatre, including opera, will open in Riga for the autumn season and whether they would have any use for me as music director there, for I must suppose the position

not yet filled, as they must hitherto have relied on Herr Schuberth. In such a case my betrothed, Fräulein Planer, at present holding the appointment of *jeune première* here, would follow me there, having already received proposals thence which she naturally would not entertain if I were not placed there too. It would give me great pleasure to be able to present her to you and to your good lady and to be permitted to recommend ourselves to your friendship as a young married pair. Once again, my honoured friend, may I ask you to see just how things stand and whether I can honourably take a place there, and to favour me with a few lines which will find me at Memel, *poste restante*. There are certain relationships in life which remain constant * * * and I shall certainly never be other than ward and *protégé* to you the guardian and patron. That is clear from this very first contact which I re-establish with you after so long an interval. If you will only show your good will to me in this situation in like measure as I most certainly preserve a thankful heart towards you, I shall count myself most fortunate. * * *

39. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG

KÖNIGSBERG, *3rd December*, 1836.

MY MOST HONOURED FRIEND!

It is long since you heard anything from me and perhaps you were already under the happy delusion that I was no more. However, I still exist, though separated by some 100 miles from civilised Germany. You can well imagine with what mad longing I cling to every remaining hope derived from that far world. You are among those hopes and must therefore forgive me if I clutch at least at your coat-sleeve. Well now, to the matter, an it please you! I should like to speak my mind and come to the point at once. You know that at the end of last year I finished an opera, *Das Liebesverbot oder die Novize von Palermo*, the libretto from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. Devil knows how it is, but I don't think the opera is bad, and our friend Banck, to whom I showed it, was of the same opinion without being asked. The thing is unsuitable on *German* soil, both subject and music, and even if I wished to adapt it particularly to Germany, what gigantic difficulties has not the unknown *German* composer to face in order to find favour in *Germany*! That is, indeed, the curse under which all *German opera* labours! I really do not know where I should try to fix it. I barred Leipzig from the first because the subject would not be to the taste of the great Ringelhardt. I shall stumble on similar obstacles on every *German* stage, particularly as I am practically banished here

in *Siberia* and my presence is prohibited in places where my personal influence counts for a little. Furthermore, what good would it be to me if I did succeed in Breslau or Braunschweig, places of which I had hopes? It would lead to nothing! I will make a bold bid for it and attempt Paris. The thing would just suit the *Opéra Comique*.

Some time ago I sent Scribe the plan of a great operatic subject [*Die hohe Braut*] in five acts. The subject is brilliant in the extreme and I have implored Scribe to lend his name, his labours and his patronage to it. I have no answer as yet, and as he is always travelling it is likely that he has not got my letter yet. Now, I should like to send my comic opera direct to the manager of the *Opéra Comique*. He might first have the music and plot criticised by Auber (and God knows whom else) and then, should it please him, he might have the libretto worked up by anyone he chose and the music adapted. I think the idea's not so bad. My God!—Auber can't surely write him a new opera every month and why shouldn't the originality of the idea please him? When all's said and done it's only an experiment.

First, however, I turn once more to you. You have, of course, manifold connections with Parisian authorities. Could you not tell me some good way of attaining my end with them? Or, if not, could you not at least send me, through your correspondents, the exact address of the *entrepreneurs* of the *Opéra Comique* and the easiest way of getting at them? Please see what can be done. If you yourself should light upon the most appropriate method of conducting the affair, I would send the score to you at Leipzig so that you may know approximately what you have to deal with. Now, just tell me, O most honoured patron of the *Romantic School*, what, roughly, is your opinion of it, what may be hoped for it, and what made of it. Established upon the very hub of speculative criticism, you will certainly be able to give me something more judicious to go upon than I am likely to get from anyone here in *Prussian Siberia*. Anyhow I place this amount of trust in your cosmopolitanism, that you will not leave me unnoticed, and I earnestly implore an answer.

Sobolevski told me yesterday that someone had brought him a new sonata [1] of yours. To-day or to-morrow I am visiting him and he is to play it to me, for I am too bad a pianist myself to want to massacre it with my own hands.

* * * You did not, apparently, accept my article [2] written from Berlin at the end of May—you were disturbed by my polemic in this form against Rellstab, perhaps? No offence! * * *

[1] Op. 11 in F sharp minor.

[2] See No. 36, p. 40, note 3.

40. TO LOUIS SCHINDELMEISSER, BERLIN

LEIPZIG, *7th June*, 1837.

* * * I thought matters over very exhaustively in the stage-coach with the result that I am now staking everything on the Riga engagement.

My dear, dear friend, once more I beg you most earnestly to do your utmost to get me the contract with Holtei as soon as possible. It is of the greatest importance to me. Once again—(my wife need not be taken into consideration at all in this matter)—1000 silver roubles—a two to three years' contract, and if you can get anything more for me out of it, let it be this:—I must necessarily be in Riga in advance for rehearsals, so I have pledged myself to be there by the middle of July, claiming on this account the sum of 100 thalers for travelling expenses (inclusive of my earlier stay at Riga), and I want this money in advance. See what you can do about it—this is certainly not an unreasonable claim. And also give me news of how things go as soon as you can, addressed to me *poste restante* at Dresden. You cannot imagine what a great thing it will mean to me if your letter contains a favourable answer from Holtei. In that event I shall come by way of Berlin before this month is out and personally give you my heartiest thanks for this fresh act of friendship on your part and again pass a few pleasant days in your company, my dear fellow! * * *

41. TO THE SAME

DRESDEN, *12th June*, 1837.

* * * Hearty thanks for your friendship! With this letter I am also dispatching a petition to the Königsberg courts for divorce [1] from my wife. I am now destitute. I must get the Riga post. I cannot get away from here at the moment. I am staying with my brother-in-law Hermann Brockhaus, Ottilie's husband. Good folk. I cannot leave them at once. Let me know by return of post if my presence in Berlin is immediately necessary, because if you could get the contract without that I should much prefer it. I haven't a penny at the moment and my affairs can't be put in order forthwith. In spite of that I shall in any case see something of you for a time in Berlin—only somewhat later. * * * This letter for Holtei. No more concealment. Many and warm thanks, my dear Louis! Adieu!! * *

42. TO DR. SCHELLWITZ, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, *13th July*, 1837.

I must first earnestly ask pardon, Sir, for venturing to trouble you with a weighty request. Emboldened by the advice of my

[1] He was reconciled to her shortly afterwards.

sister Ottilie and by her assurance that you would not object to fulfil a request of this kind if you were able to do so, I take the liberty of begging you to be so kind as to obtain for me a passport from Leipzig for my journey to Riga. I might, indeed, have asked my brother Julius to do me this service, but considering that the matter is somewhat complicated by my absence from Leipzig and by the fact that I have been away from the town for a long time, I shall undoubtedly do better—as my sister advised me—to apply to one more experienced than my brother in these matters, and I therefore turn direct to you * *. The chief obstacle, my earlier liability to military service, is removed by the fact of my marriage, and probably the only objection now would be that I have been for some time abroad. I can plead against this, however, that I came to Prussia three years ago without a passport or the need of one, and have since returned without one. Now I cannot obtain a passport from Königsberg, my last place of residence, without personal application there. I would therefore like to pass once more for a Leipziger, name, Richard Wagner, age, twenty-four years, appointed as kapellmeister to the theatre at Riga by contract, who wishes to travel thither via Berlin but is uncertain as yet whether to travel via Lübeck by sea or overland through East Prussia. If other obstacles should arise I trust in your knowledge and skill to overcome them to my advantage. * *

43. TO AUGUST LEWALD, STUTTGART

[RIGA, *November* 1838.

MOST HONOURED SIR!

It is now nearly two years since I introduced myself to your notice from Königsberg. Since then I have never discharged my debt of thanks to you for having taken up a man quite unknown to you in an extraordinarily friendly manner, for having acceded to my request that you would place my composition [Carnival song from *Liebesverbot*] in your *Europa* and for having vouchsafed very particular attention to my interests. May I now, by way of thanks, intrude upon you with yet greater confidence? * * * Well, then, I wrote to you about an opera which I had offered Scribe with suggested surrender of author's rights in the libretto. The case was like this. I made up my mind once for all to languish fifteen years in total obscurity rather than try my fortunes as an operatic composer on the pettifogging German stage (to which I am nevertheless bound at present for a livelihood) and having determined to work tirelessly during that period to force a way for myself into the greater

world, I wrought out one subject (among others) in some detail for a big five-act opera, especially designed for Paris. I took my subject from König's magnificent romance *Die hohe Braut*. My sketch, which was pretty thoroughly worked out apart from the necessary versification, I sent to Scribe in a passable French translation with the suggestion that if the subject pleased him he should put himself to the slight trouble of versifying it or of dealing with it in any way he liked, whereupon I would compose the opera and he might get it produced in Paris under his direction and in his name as author, in which case I should hold at his disposal as much as he liked to claim of any profits accruing from the whole undertaking—the least, after all, that an unknown German composer could offer. I handed over my sketch and the covering letter to my brother-in-law Friedrich Brockhaus to be forwarded to Paris. After waiting six months in vain for an answer, I wrote again to Scribe, taking upon myself part of the blame for his having ignored my letter, and saying I could well believe he would be in doubt how to reply since he knew nothing of me nor of my capacity as a composer, and meeting this difficulty by sending him the score of my big operatic comedy already completed, *Das Liebesverbot oder die Novize von Palermo*, after Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. I asked him to get an opinion on the score from Auber or Meyerbeer so that he might judge whether I were capable of composing an opera for Paris. In case the opera was approved I offered him *this* one at once, suggesting that he should get someone or other to do a free French translation of the libretto which he could then work up to his liking into an operatic plot of the Scribe type suitable for offering to the *Opéra Comique*. Thereupon, in June 1837, I received an answer from Scribe which cleared him of earlier negligence, for he had not received my first letter and sketch forwarded through Brockhaus; did not now know how he stood in regard to me; thanked me for the score I had sent; asked for a more precise explanation of my wants and finally promised gladly to do what lay in his power in the matter. That was good hearing and I hastened to write to him from Dresden where I was living at the time, and to send him an earlier copy of the rough sketch for a grand opera in five acts after König's *Hohe Braut*, which had got lost. I posted the letter—unfranked for safety—and then—silence!

Since then, despite my intense longing for the South, my stupid fate has perpetually driven me northwards. I followed Holtei as kapellmeister to his theatre at Riga. All kinds of troubles put my French expedition out of mind for a long time, and I received no further answer from Scribe. Still, my hopes and plans were not to

be killed altogether and now here in Siberia my longing to make an appearance in France has reawakened. I must make another bid for it and—don't be afraid!—I am going to open my attack upon *you*. Scribe and Paris are too far away from me now, and I need a middleman accustomed to that world and able to deal with the business direct. But what makes me plague *you* of all people, for whom the world is all too full of Richard Wagners? Listen then! More than by the brilliant standing which you hold in present-day German journalism, I am attracted by the kindliness which you frequently show in assisting the deserving yet unfortunate efforts of others. You seem to have made it a duty to spend your rich resources in encouraging and bringing to light unrecognised talents. Moreover, without being yourself in our position, you sympathised so completely with us unfortunate German operatic composers that one's heart warms to you and one is inclined to believe you must sometime or other have secretly composed an opera and seen it moulder unnoticed. That is one of my reasons; but I have another, which is that I am given to understand that Schlesier is still with you and is probably a friend of yours. Now Schlesier is my school friend, and oh, do tell him from me that if he were in Timbuctoo I should certainly write to him from Novaya Zemlya. He can tell you how, when we were at the Kreuzschule, we two swore death to Creuzer's theory of symbolism, emulating the noble Hofrat Böttiger; how I began to write philological epics and tragedies; how later in Leipzig we took up Schelling's transcendental idealism, on occasion of which I still owe him 82 groats, how we ate ice-cream one Sunday with Laube when I brought him news of his sentence of banishment. O Lord, tell him to think of Ortlepp and Lauchstädt and *then* tell you whether I'm not worth anybody's interest on that account alone, setting aside all question of an operatic project which will undoubtedly confer a lot of immortality upon all who have anything to do with it! Seriously, though, I hope Schlesier will warm your heart towards me, or rather to my interests, and may God bless him for it in wife and child! Now, how would it be, my dear Sir, if you were to constitute yourself my complete protector and in that capacity were to have a cut at the famous Scribe? By the way, I want an early explanation from that man. Did he, or did he not, receive a letter from me from Dresden, dated 1837? If he did not get it, this proposition must of course be put before him again and in this particular, as indeed in general, I take the liberty of explaining the affair to you and of enclosing to that end a copy of the sketch-plan I have spoken of for a grand opera after König's romance, so that you can go into it at your pleasure. If Scribe *did* get the

manuscript, why did he not say something or other about it? In this case I leave entirely to you the means of bringing him to a favourable decision.

If neither you nor he like the subject—my God, I'm ready enough with another! I am at present working upon a big five-act opera, *Rienzi,* which I have completed and of which I have now composed the first act. *Rienzi* is, no doubt, a far more impressive thing than the other. I have it in German and intend to try whether it is possible to get it produced at the Berlin Grand Opera within the next fifty years or so, if I am spared so long. Scribe may like it perhaps and *Rienzi* can sing in French at any moment. It might be a means of spurring on the Berliners to acceptance if one could say the Parisian stage was ready to take it up, but that *they* were to have the first refusal. To present an opera of this kind fitly to the world, some really important stage, such as that of Berlin or Paris, is absolutely necessary. I shall lack neither matter nor perseverance, for I feel quite clear within myself that I should by now have produced God alone knows how much work if I could only have found an open door. Heaven is my witness that this will turn out to be no vain boast, but so much is certain, if I am not emancipated within fifteen years, I shall be arrogant enough to write operas for Frankfort-on-Oder or Tilsit!

Now, my dear Sir, just attempt with me this emancipation of an operatic composer; make use of your connections with Meyerbeer and anyone else whom you think might be useful for our project and show what a German may do for a German whom he doesn't even know. * * * In the Pantheon which the Germans will doubtless shortly build for the men who have done best service, you will then naturally obtain an extra special super-monument and God, amazed to see a German man of letters helping a poor German composer to Parisian honours, will be put to it to decide what blessing to bestow on him. But apart from these celestial rewards, it is an understood thing that you have only to claim what share you please of any profits arising from a fortunate reception of the piece. However that may be, it is clear that I must here and now ask pardon for my lengthy importunities, and I think I cannot express my repentance better than by taking leave of you as quickly as possible. Please give my kindest regards to Schlesier and jog his memories of me. I last received news of him from the prison at Bingen and only learned of his happy release by seeing his literary criticisms in your *Europa.*——————

Oh, Gustav, Gustav,—but I won't give way to sentiment, I rather trust myself with good courage to you, your kindness and

undeserved support. Be successful and you will indeed have done a great service to all us poor composers!

P.S. I found the accompanying poem [*Der Tannenbaum*, a ballad by Scheuerlin] in the *Musenalmanach*. Little as I like the fir-tree's melancholy at the moment, one can sometimes scarcely avoid it in Livonia. I have composed the song in the Livonian mode and send it you with the request that you might put it in *Europa*.[1] Only do not judge from this piece of my method of composing opera, which is, I thank God, less Livonian. If you like, I will from time to time send you an article for *Europa* from Riga, as long as the wrath of God and Scribe's indifference keep me here in banishment. I can also give you the pleasure of knowing that a free copy of *Europa* would delight me greatly. * * *

44. TO JOHANN HOFFMANN, RIGA

[RIGA, *February* 1839.]

* * When Herr von Holtei discharged Herr Musikdirector Löbmann, although I was exceedingly sorry and had made several vain attempts to prevent it, I felt I ought to use the occasion to relieve my own far from flourishing pecuniary situation, and consequently suggested to Herr von Holtei * * * that I should take on Herr Löbmann's duties—the rehearsal and conducting of lesser operas and vaudeville—till the end of my contract, and that with a good conscience as regards the interests of the establishment for which he was responsible, he for his part might remit the rest of the deductions on account of the advance made to me, to the great betterment of my very straitened finances. However, Herr von Holtei replied that he could not accept this proposal (to work off my overdraft) and on the contrary thought it necessary to engage someone at once to take up Herr Löbmann's duties. He thanked me for my offer but would have the operas and vaudeville in question conducted by the leader of the orchestra until the appointment of a new director of music. You will at once perceive from this refusal of my offer that the management held me in no sense bound to these subordinate functions. Furthermore, at the signing of the contract with me in Berlin, Herr von Holtei, disclosing as part of the conditions the lines on which his theatre was run, told me that he had already engaged a music director in the person of Herr Löbmann for rehearsing and conducting lesser operas and vaudeville, and gave the higher salary assigned to the music director for this very purpose as the reason why he was unable to pay me the salary of

[1] It appeared there in the volume for the year 1839, p. 620.

1000 roubles formerly allotted by the committee for the post of kapellmeister. The music director engaged with me did, in fact, rehearse and conduct operettas [1] such as *Ochsenmenuett*, *Schwestern von Prag*, and *Rochus Pumpernickel*, and I was actually superior to him in function. However, the music director expected after the above-mentioned correspondence with Herr Holtei failed to appear, and seriously I can hardly think it necessary or desirable for you to engage anyone for the job now, before September of this year, which, I take it, will probably be your opinion too. The duties of the post have meanwhile naturally fallen to me and I now ask you to be so kind as to agree to the proposal formerly made to Herr von Holtei and herewith renewed. If it were simply a question of a favour which I could render personally to you I should naturally not hesitate to do so, the more so that you have been so consistently kind, but since I know that I cannot serve you or your personal interests (which I hold not to be entirely bound up with those of the present management) by the performance of these duties outside my contract, I hope that you will not take it ill of me if I do as anyone else would certainly do in my place, and bear my own interests in mind. But please do not mistake me * * * I do not wish to appear unaccommodating or lacking in zeal, for indeed no one could reproach me on that score. On the contrary I here offer to do all that is within my power. I will cheerfully work day and night for the theatre, I will undertake every duty I can possibly cope with, I will orchestrate whole scores and anything else that may be asked of me, but I want to be assured that I am to be remunerated for it. I owe that to myself and to my position. Once more then in short—I herewith request from you a total remittance of my advance (of course with the exception of the thirty roubles which I recently received from you and which I am to pay off by five roubles each pay-day) and in return I offer to undertake anything you like to heap upon my shoulders, with the sole exception of boot-cleaning and water-carrying, which last my heart is not equal to at the moment. But I really would copy scores if I had not good grounds to fear the result of this melancholy employment in overclouding my temperament. The chance to help me is there and I am convinced you will acclaim it with joy, even if only that posterity may say of you, "He was the man who, etc., etc." [2]

[1] The composers of these operettas are Ignaz von Seyfried, Wenzel Müller and Karl David Stegmann.

[2] Wagner's financial position grew worse as the year went on, so that he was forced to flee from his creditors (see Summary, p. 357).

(*c*) FIRST RESIDENCE IN PARIS, 1839–1842

45. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, EDWARD AVENARIUS, PARIS

BOULOGNE, *23rd August*, 1839.

HONOURED SIR AND FRIEND,

Permit me to hail you forthwith by this familiar name, since I personally am already so much predisposed to you by what I have heard of the amiability and probity of your character that I shall strain every nerve to earn the name and rights of a friend in fact. Laying claim to this status in advance, I have already repeatedly laid myself under obligation to you through my kind sister Cecilie, and the readiness with which you have already undertaken a somewhat difficult matter [1] on my behalf is an earnest to me that the request which is the immediate object of this letter will not be made wholly in vain. You doubtless already know through Cecilie that I now have bold--perhaps too adventurous—designs on Paris. You will be able to judge for yourself with what spirit I am prepared to face a multitude of obstacles when you have done me the kindness of lending ear to my news and views, and my principal reliance is in the good counsel which I at once and heartily beg you to extend to me.

Some twelve days ago, after a horrible and very hazardous voyage of nearly four weeks by sailing ship, I arrived in London, on whose very expensive pavements I was forced to spend eight days, eight ruinous days, through a mistake on the part of the captain who made some stupid muddle with my baggage. On the twentieth day I arrived by steamer at Boulogne where with all possible speed I engaged for a few weeks the cheapest room I could get, out in the country, that is to say about half an hour outside the town. I chose the place upon several considerations. (1) I do not think I should yet meet in Paris many people useful to my schemes. (2) I have still a few weeks' work to do on what I should like to bring *completed* to Paris, so that on arrival I may be able to begin my machinations forthwith. (3) I really want to rest here a little from the hardships I have undergone before plunging into the hurly-burly which undoubtedly awaits me in Paris. May I, then, in the meantime ask you to get me a lodging in Paris, kindly taking note of the following: an ordinary room with an alcove is naturally quite sufficient for my wife and myself—we could do with a some-

[1] He had inquired whether Scribe had received the score of *Die Liebesverbot*.

what larger room without the alcove—and it must of course be furnished, though we have our own beds and bedding, table appointments, lamps, kitchen utensils, for we have brought almost our entire little household with us and only sold the least portable things in Russia. My wife will keep house herself, that is to say buy the food, cook, etc., and will need no service except that of a charwoman to help her with the roughest work. * * * *

46. TO THE SAME

BOULOGNE, 13*th September*, 1839.

MY MOST HONOURED SIR,

If I have left your friendly and helpful letter so long unanswered it is because *this* letter is designed to inform you definitely of the day of my arrival in Paris. * * * For the same reason I am only writing a few lines now, for soon I shall meet you and hope to be able to discuss things with you by word of mouth. I leave here by diligence on Monday, the 16th of this month, and shall be in Paris very early on Tuesday. And now to come at once to one of the main points, I once again take advantage of the kindness for which I cannot be sufficiently grateful and ask you to engage in advance a room sufficiently large for myself and my wife, in an *hôtel garni* as you yourself suggested and, to begin with, upon a weekly tenancy. * * * *

As to my affairs, only this much, that I would never have remained so long in Boulogne and paid English prices if I had not, by a fortunate accident, met Meyerbeer here, who may be immeasurably useful for my plans and with whom I have already linked myself as securely as I have been able. But that, too, we will discuss by word of mouth, as also your news of my family. * * * *

47. TO THE SAME

[PARIS, 20*th September*, 1839], 4.30 *o'clock*.

MY MOST HONOURED FRIEND,

Weary and harassed as almost never before, I have just come home, having been out since 10 o'clock knocking about with Garcia, Joly, Dumersan, Meyerbeer, etc., so I must heartily thank you for your invitation to go to the Italian Opera with you to-day but must postpone the pleasure for another time. For the rest, I have to-day come to know Garcia for a most amiable and helpful creature and she has offered to assist me in any way I may ask her to do so. * * *

48. TO HEINRICH SCHLETTER, LEIPZIG

PARIS, *15th September*, 1840.

In any other situation than just that in which I am placed it might well seem more than odd for a man entirely unknown to you personally to approach you quite without forewarning upon a matter of no little importance. Less with a view to interesting you in me and more with the object of acquainting you with me in some degree, I introduce myself as one of the Wagners of Leipzig, a family with which I have reason to believe you have some acquaintance. I am a composer and a year ago gave up the career of director of music, which I had pursued for six years, finishing at Riga, in order to promote my very earnest desire to distinguish myself if possible as a composer in Paris. As I am entirely without means, I was soon forced to see that I had a huge undertaking before me, for although it is true that fame can only be won in Paris nowadays it is also indisputable that nowhere else are there greater obstacles to be met. These difficulties can only be overcome with time, and that is the crucial point for one who has not resources on which he can rely. I have now been a year in Paris. I soon recognised that I had endless difficulties to encounter and would certainly have left the place within the first few months had I not found a great friend and protector in Herr Meyerbeer, through whom I believed that I should attain my goal sooner than would otherwise be possible. Indeed, all my hopes of speedy success were based on my belief in Meyerbeer's steady support. Unluckily he has been obliged to spend almost the whole of this period, with very few intervals, abroad, a fact which has had a most crippling effect on my undertakings, since nothing but *personal* influence is any good in Paris in cases of this sort. Added to this, the *Théâtre de la Renaissance*, at which I had got an opera accepted by Meyerbeer's help, went bankrupt. During his last short stay in Paris, Herr Meyerbeer again helped my affairs forward, so that I now have a perfectly secure mutual agreement with the administration of the Grand Opera which this time I hope will, eventually, lead me to my goal. Lacking all support, it is only by a miracle that I have been able to hold on so long. I have now come to the end of my resources; even if I decided to relinquish all my hopes I could not now leave Paris. Only some special help can save me now.

In any other state of life I would be ashamed, as a married man, to have to beg for assistance — for assistance I must call it since I cannot at present conscientiously promise the speedy repayment of a debt. Still, I think I may consider my present situation as extraordinary, and it is in this conviction that I can ask, without

a blush, for the help without which I and the goal of my life must now be lost. I can boast of several good and true friends, but most of them are not much better off than myself and none is in a position to give me effectual help. I hope you will attribute my applying thus to one who is at present an entire stranger to the exigencies of my situation. I am given to understand that you are in a better position than many others to advance a sum of money with only a doubtful eventuality for security. Many fine things told me of you lead me to believe you great-hearted enough to do so. I therefore unblushingly apply to you in particular to help a poor artist in the most important and decisive of his enterprises with the sum of fifteen hundred francs. I know well that this is no small sum even for a well-to-do man, but it is the least that I need to be able to pursue my way with any courage. Then I must pray be allowed to regard it only as a loan, the repayment of which would be the prior and most pressing call upon the first-fruits of my undertaking![1] * * * *

49. TO THEODORE APEL, ERMLITZ

PARIS, 20*th September*, 1840.

MY THEODORE!

In a situation of which you yourself can probably have no conception and in which I too see myself brought to the extreme limit of possible misfortunes, I turn again to the friend of my—alas!—vanished youth, to one who has himself suffered the hardest of fates. To avoid all appearance of hypocrisy I set the most egotistic part of my letter, which should fitly be reserved for the end, at the beginning of this, my first communication for years. It is this: *I am in the depths of misfortune and you are to help me!* * * * For a year I have been living with my wife without being able to earn a penny, without a farthing to call my own. Think what this confession means and you will see what makes me begin my first letter to you for years as I do.—

It is over four years since we saw each other. Since then you have become *blind*[2] and I must begin my first letter to you like this—there is a stroke of Fate enough for us both!—

We had scarcely begun to realise that we had our youth before us when we had to feel it crushed out of us. Your flight was checked by blindness, mine through everlasting want. When last we parted and I turned North—do you know what sad foreboding seized me?

[1] Schletter helped him. Wagner also made quite considerable profits on hackwork for the music publisher Moritz Schlesinger. Cf. his letter to Edward Avenarius, 22 February, 1841.

[2] As the result of a riding accident in 1836.

THEODORE APEL

From a lithograph by A. Hunger, after a photograph by C. Schaufuss, Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig

It was a foreboding that we should never again see each other with our hands clasped so! Long ago, want ate into my light-hearted courage and hung like a weight upon my natural sanguine vigour. I have been unfortunate in every one of my attempts to reach my high goal as an artist. I got so far that my opera [*Das Liebesverbot*] had been accepted in Berlin and all that was necessary was for me to stay there six months to keep an eye upon the weak and vacillating manager [Cerf], over whom I had, nevertheless, personal influence, but I was too poor and no one would help me. I gave it up, as I have given up so much since then, and went to Königsberg where I was promised a post. There I married, but poverty and want persecuted me. I could not get the post promised me, and had to struggle on as best I could. Then at last I heard the first news of you from someone who had just seen you in Leipzig. From that hour I knew the meaning of my foreboding, but never had I believed that it could receive so terrible a fulfilment. When we meet again, ask my wife what I became like from that hour! The poor thing suffered greatly under it! I lost all joyousness, all freedom, all openness. The best way to make you see what condition I was in is to say that was the year of my life in which I composed scarcely a note, planned nothing, took a grip of nothing. I was very miserable! After this year of suffering my situation improved, at least outwardly. I got a good position as director of music at Riga. There I spent two fairly peaceful years. I might say that I began to recover there, except that I was forced to see that I was never made to earn my bread in that fashion. I tried to find forgetfulness in almost passionate activity, but my physique was not made for that and the northern climate was bad for me. I became seriously ill and a nervous fever threatened to make an end of me. I had scarcely begun to get well when I heard that during my illness my supposed friend Dorn [1] had deprived me of my post in the most treacherous way! It was terrible, but in the midst of my excitement I tried to see the will of God in it, as though the event were a sign to me not to stand still but to press on again to my high goal. I got together a few hundred roubles and told my wife we would go to Paris. Out of love for me she consented, though she never has very exalted hopes and foresaw what misery lay before us. We embarked in a sailing ship and after a terrible journey of four weeks, during which storms brought us three times within an ace of death, we got to London, whence we proceeded at once to Boulogne-sur-Mer. Our resources were already so diminished that I thought it almost impossible for us to maintain ourselves even a few weeks in Paris.

[1] Cf. *My Life*, pp. 190-2.

Then by a miracle of fate I met Meyerbeer in Boulogne. I told him about myself and my compositions and he became my friend and protector. I knew that my prospects in Paris could only be expedited by patronage such as Meyerbeer could give me, so I took courage and decided to make the venture. Oh, what awaited me in Paris, what a mixture of hopes and disappointments! Meyerbeer has remained tirelessly faithful to my interests, but unluckily family affairs have forced him to spend most of his time abroad and, since nothing but *personal* influence is any use here, this circumstance has of course had the most crippling effect upon my affairs. Hopes alone support me, but apart from these it is clear that my situation, with a wife and without a farthing of earnings, is the most terrible in the world. More than once I have longed for death—at any rate I have become quite indifferent to it.

I have thought of you, my Theodore, my heart heavy with grief. I never received any detailed news of you and what was told me was—was *horrible*! Is it true that you did not even know your friends?! I had not the means even to condole with you. What could I do—utterly destitute? You were my friend, whom I mourned for, but who could hear me no more!——Then, quite a little while ago, I heard detailed news of you from a Leipzig lady staying in Paris. What I heard then shook me, moved me deeply, yet it filled me with revived hope! I learned that your malady was now only physical and that there were substantial hopes that you would recover even from that. Oh, believe that that was the only news which could have lifted me in an instant from the gulf into which my misfortunes had cast me! I was told, too, in confirmation of the news, that you had published a volume of *Poems*. You are still a poet! My poor, poor friend, you can still sing, for you have suffered the deepest anguish! Just for a moment let me drag myself out of my slough of despond and tell you that I too am still a poet—or perhaps we have both only just become such! My God, it seems to me this moment as if we both sat together again before some fair prospect and that you could see it! Hope on, hope on, my Theodore, we *shall* see again! And don't you see how I have been living *in* you, at one with you? The work I have just completed is called *Rienzi, the Last of the Tribunes*! Who first thought of that idea? I believe, too, that we have done the work together! Anyway it is my best. Let me call it to you *our Rienzi*, now an opera in five acts. I brought it half finished to Paris with me. When I planned it I destined it for this place. I soon found, however, that I might wait two or three years yet before I could get so big a work performed, for I should first have to make a name by smaller operas.

So I decided, lest my favourite work should perish, to get the opera finished in German and destined it for the German stage. I chose Dresden. It is in some sort my native town and I have made all preparations, with Meyerbeer's particular help, to get the opera definitely taken on there. Furthermore, Dresden now has a big and really worthy theatre. Tichatschek and Devrient are suited to my rôles and with them I hope to make a success there. In a month I am sending off the score; it may be produced by the beginning of next year and I shall go there myself. There we are,—old friends again! You would never have heard all this if you hadn't published a volume of *Poems*!—

You see, Theodore, these are just lightning flashes which sometimes break upon my sight, yet they do not illumine my darkness for—O my God!—what hopes have I not already seen destroyed! I would almost prefer certain death, yet here, it seems, one cannot die so quickly. Paris is too rich, too rich in prospects, too various not to offer ever fresh hopes. At present I again stand in a fairly favourable relationship with the Grand Opera on account of a two- or three-act piece *The Flying Dutchman*, my sketch for the subject of which has won great approbation. Have I not once again much to hope for?

But I wish now that I could buy medicine for my poor wife! Will she survive this misery and shall I be able to bear hers? Lord God, help me! I no longer know how to help myself! I have exhausted everything, everything, every last resource of the starving. I, unfortunate, never knew mankind till now. Money—it is the curse that annihilates everything noble. Many a friend, ready to do service, cools at that word. Relations stiffen before it is even mentioned. And yet, good God!—what is all other help often enough compared to this most real one? Those who know real need feel that *that* alone can relieve it. In those days when you made sacrifice after sacrifice for me I thought I really knew what want was. Oh, fool that I am, I have learned now that I mistook embarrassment for need. To have to turn the last little piece of jewellery, the last bit of necessary household stuff belonging to one's wife, into bread, to have to leave her then, sick and suffering, without help, because the pawning of the engagement ring did not yield enough to procure bread *and* medicine—what can I say now about my one-time talk of want! In a word — God forgive me — I curse life. What more bitter thing can I do? My first word to the friend I have but just found again is—send me speedy aid! My life is in pawn—redeem it! Well then—I beseech you for *three hundred thalers* and, be assured, if you send it to me, I have already lived over eight months on such

a sum, for all this time I have been able to afford nothing but bread. If you too turn your back on me I know what my fate will be!

This then is my cry from the pit of misery! Will it soften you? Am I yet to know happiness? For all answer to this question I have only a bitter sigh! And yet there are hours when, looking at the paltriness of those who oppose me now, I could feel proud of my situation if it were not that I have to look upon my poor good wife. She has sacrificed her youth to me and all I can do for her is to—send you this letter. I am doing it behind her back, for I know she would dissuade me from it, having *no* hope left. I am doing it all the same; I *must* write to you now my heart is so full, to wish you luck when you are recovering from four years of illness. * * *

If you would like to give me a day of joy once more, write to me by return of post.[1] * * * *

[1] Apel did not answer nor send money. Wagner was consequently imprisoned for debt. We learn this from a letter to Theodore Apel from Wagner's wife Minna, 28 October, 1840, which shall be given here in full. It runs:

"* * Please do not be surprised to get a letter from me, and a letter of *such* purport. * * * Early to-day Richard had to leave me to go to prison for debt. I am still so terribly agitated that all my senses are confused. The one thing which has just enabled me to collect my thoughts a little more calmly is a letter from Herr Laube which has just arrived and which I have opened in Richard's absence. On the one hand it robs me of all hope of seeing our misfortunes alleviated, while on the other it gives me courage to dare this last—I admit it—venture of despair.—In this letter Herr Laube writes that you had expressed friendship and sympathy. If you knew * * how used we are to unfriendliness and lack of sympathy in those whom we are obliged to ask to help us, you would see why this news has raised my hopes again a little. * * * My poor husband, who as a foreigner has not even the advantages belonging to a native in such a situation, is in the hands of a German domiciled here who is proceeding against him so ruthlessly that he cannot count on his ever relaxing his severity. * * Even if I had the means of leaving Paris myself, I would not for the world leave Richard in such a situation, for I know that it is not frivolity which is responsible but that the noblest and most natural efforts of an artist have brought a fate upon him which unhappily must have overtaken anyone who had no special source of aid. It was only after doing my best to dissuade him that I agreed to his plan of going to Paris, but the better I have become acquainted with his projects here the more I perceive that it will only be for lack of sufficient support if he is ruined here and fails to attain his goal. * * * He had got work and was already making almost as much as I need to run a small home for him with economy, but to-day's occurrence has brought it all to nothing. * * In a fortnight his overture to his *Rienzi*, which he has just finished and which promised great success, should have been performed, but unless he is present at the rehearsal this cannot be. Is that not enough to drive one to despair? * * * Can you, who have so long kept a place in your heart for my Richard, let him be lost to us because of a remarkable opera? * * * Some time ago I discovered to my horror how much Richard already owes you. Your credit supplied him with money then, and yet what was his situation at that time compared with our present one? Should not such an opera meet with a far better fate—because now there is a prospect that we might be able to repay the debt within a couple of years at most? Believe me, I do not usually share Richard's exalted hopes, but now I know from his own lips that he has but one step more to reach his goal! * * *"

The relentless creditor here referred to appears to be Edward Fechner, the

50. TO KING FREDERICK AUGUSTUS OF SAXONY

[PARIS], *1st December*, 1840.

If, from this capital city of France, I dare to address Your Majesty thus directly with a * * petition * * my excuse may perhaps

painter, uncle to Wagner's friend Kietz, to whom Wagner wrote an angry letter on 13 May, 1842. This, however, is not at variance with Wagner's invitation to Fechner on 18 January, 1841.

Very soon, Minna, received an answer from Apel, a letter only, but holding out some prospect of help to come, to which she replied as follows:

"PARIS, *17th November*, 1840.

"MOST ESTEEMED HERR APEL!—First I feel that I ought to beg your pardon for the manner and vehemence with which I lately wrote to you. It is becoming clear to me that my violent excitement must be ill-suited to stir your sympathy for our fate. Your silence tells me that I am right. But be so good as to attribute the agitation which probably affected you unpleasantly and may even have wounded you, to the great sorrow, the stunning blow which fell upon me that day. Since then I have become calmer—much calmer. I have been to see Richard and have given him your esteemed letter. He thanks you warmly for it. At the same time I comforted him with trust in you and awakened in him the hope that you may decide to make some extraordinary sacrifice in view of an extraordinary situation I confess to you that I have daily tarried in expectation of the fulfilment of my despairing request. Richard is ill. I would like to go and nurse him, but as that would mean expense which I cannot meet, I must leave him to God's care in this respect. * *

"Richard's creditor sent to me yesterday and had the impertinence to suggest that I should write to Richard's brother-in-law H. Brockhaus to get him to pay the debt. So he knows this relationship and I now understand why he proceeded so severely against my husband. But Richard and I, we would endure our lot for years on end rather than break our vow never to be a burden to his relations again. Nevertheless this step has decided me to apply to you once again, even at peril of being spurned by you as an importunate person. As intermediary I am perhaps better able than Richard to ask you to make a sacrifice, as I speak more for another than for myself. I can even place myself beside you, for I too have made sacrifices for him. I have given up my own peaceful independence to bind myself to his destiny which it seems must be accomplished only through the most violent storms and trials. * * * In your letter to Richard you reply that it is impossible for you to do more for him than you actually were doing. It is proof of your good and generous will that you should have done so much. I must believe that you can make no greater sacrifice on his behalf without exceeding your usual scale of expenditure, since you assure us it is so. But with no desire to boast, let me tell you what, as a girl, I did for a brother who was less near to me perhaps than Richard is to you. My brother was to study in Leipzig, but my parents could not support him there. I undertook to do so at a time when the finances of the theatrical management were in such a bad way that I often lacked four groats to buy myself dinner. I then pawned my earrings and other things of the kind which were often indispensable to me for my theatrical work and sent the money to my brother to pay for his lessons, keeping back only threepence to buy myself a roll that I ate for my dinner while I walked about the town, having told the people at my lodging that I had an invitation to dine. Is it right that only the poor and needy should have the feelings which lead to such sacrifices? Ought not the wealthy, for whom it should by comparison be so very much easier, to be able with all their resources to help in the same way? I may be told that it was for a brother; it would not be too much to sacrifice half one's livelihood for a brother; ought not a friend then to be worth a hundredth part? And Richard was and is your friend in a special sense. I can testify to it, for

be found in the fact that I, as a Saxon and Your Majesty's most faithful subject, could not bring myself to let pass what is, for me at least, an extraordinarily important occasion without satisfying the urgent longing, ever growing upon me in my exile, to express immediately my deepest and most entire devotion to my most gracious Lord and King.

Born in Leipzig, while yet a child I visited with my family Your Majesty's residence at Dresden where my stepfather Ludwig Geyer held the post of Court Player at Your Majesty's Court Theatre and had the immeasurable good fortune, being also a portrait painter, to be honoured by the most gracious favour of the King's Most Excellent Majesty with the royal commission to paint portraits of the most illustrious Royal Family.

I have devoted myself to musical composition and ten years ago had the good fortune to see some of my instrumental works performed with approbation in my native city. Since then I have held the post of director of music in several German cities; but, being inspired with the particular desire to distinguish myself in dramatic composition, yet feeling that the smaller provincial theatres of Germany were in no way adapted to found the fame of works first produced upon their boards, and not having at that time unfortunately the courage to turn, as now, with respectful confidence to Your Majesty's self, I at length decided to follow the example of so many Germans and to pursue my above-mentioned purpose in Paris.

My hopes for the success of my project were at first strengthened by my good fortune in winning the friendship of the renowned Herr Meyerbeer, whose patronage has already carried me so far that I am now in most friendly negotiation with the administration of the *Académie Royale de Musique* with regard to an opera to be composed especially for that theatre.

Nevertheless I have ever retained a burning desire to dedicate

I saw the impression the first news of your sad fate made upon him and I was witness of and sympathiser with the very deep emotion with which he always thought of you when for years he was parted from you. And more—it would not become me, it is true, to let myself go upon the subject—in Richard there is a talent to be saved which otherwise is nearly lost, for he has nearly lost the courage without which his high destiny will never be fulfilled. A heavy responsibility rests, perhaps, on those who shrug a shoulder and turn away from him now. I cannot give him up; that perhaps is why I am the one to feel most keenly how shameful it is to let him perish. I am begging for my husband, for your friend. Will you abandon *our* Richard when it is a matter of sending him a sum of money quickly upon *your* credit? Indeed you cannot do it. * * * *"

Apel then sent money, and Wagner was freed from prison; but very soon afterwards he was in danger of going back there, as we see from his letter to Heinrich Laube, 3 December, 1840.

my best artistic powers to my German Fatherland. Urged by this ambition, I have completed here in Paris a grand opera entitled *Rienzi*, and I have done so with the express view of offering it for first performance to Your Majesty's Court Theatre. * * *

I beg that Your Majesty may be pleased to grant that a first performance of my opera *Rienzi*, the score of which I am sending at once to Your Majesty's Master of the Household and to the Intendant of the Court Theatre, His Excellency Baron von Lüttichau, may take place upon Your Majesty's stage at Dresden.

If Your Majesty in graciously acceding to this petition[1] should think fit to grant me also the inexpressible happiness of being permitted to dedicate my work with the deepest respect to Your Most Gracious Majesty, the most brilliant reception by the public would appear to me insipid and worthless compared with the exalted consciousness of having seen my first considerable work come to birth under the particular and benevolent protection of my most gracious Lord and King and upon the soil of my Fatherland.—* * *

51. TO BARON VON LÜTTICHAU, DRESDEN

PARIS, *4th December*, 1840.

Your Excellency may perhaps think it strange to hear a man's name for the first time and at the same time to be approached by him with so considerable a petition as that which is the occasion of my letter. Although I am a Saxon I have never, I regret to say, been fortunate enough to find a suitable occasion of laying any circumstantial proofs of my artistic capacities before the public of my Fatherland. None the less, even now when I have just succeeded in getting into direct negotiations with the management of the *Académie Royale de Musique* in Paris on the question of an operatic subject to be composed especially for that theatre, I am hoping at the same time that I may have the inestimable good fortune of attaining an equally happy result of my labours *there* where I must ever account it the highest and most flattering honour to see my endeavours received with favour.

I take the liberty of addressing myself to Your Excellency, patron of the arts and Intendant of His Majesty the King's Court Theatre, with the humble plea that you will graciously consider the petition which I herewith confidently urge upon Your Excellency's attention. As it has always been one of my dearest hopes one day to see a great dramatic work of my own composition produced at the Court Theatre in the capital of my native land, I have

[1] It was a lengthy business to get *Rienzi* accepted. See Nos. 54, 55, 57, 60.

recently devoted my chief energies to completing an opera, the chief rôles of which I designed especially for certain singers of exceptional talent who have the great good fortune to be members of the Dresden Court Theatre. This work, a grand opera in five acts entitled *Rienzi*, has just been completed and I now hasten to send Your Excellency the score and book of the same in the hope that you may be pleased to accord it a first performance at the Court Theatre. * * * *

May I further be allowed the liberty of making mention of a certain circumstance which may perhaps be worthy of Your Excellency's notice? When I finally resolved to write a grand opera with a view to offering it to the Dresden Court Theatre for first performance, I heard that the scheme for building a new and splendid playhouse there was shortly to be accomplished. What I was told of the magnificent scale upon which this building was to be completed suggested to me the idea of elaborating the *décor* of my opera in a manner commensurate with the possibilities of such a playhouse. A glance over the libretto of my opera would convince Your Excellency that it is perhaps just the work to find place in the repertoire for the Court Theatre to be chosen and staged after the opening of the new playhouse. * * * *

52. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG[1]

PARIS, *29th December*, 1840.

MOST EXCELLENT HERR SCHUMANN,

I have been in Paris almost a year and a half. It is magnificent that I have not as yet starved to death. You will soon hear great things of me for I am upon the point of becoming immensely famous. First of all, however, to the occasion of these lines. I hear that you have set Heine's *Grenadiers* to music and that the *Marseillaise* comes in at the close. Last winter *I* composed it too and I too introduced the *Marseillaise* at the close. That is a significant thing! I composed my *Grenadiers* straight away to a French translation which I had done here and with which Heine was satisfied. It was sung here and there, and brought me the Order of the Legion of Honour and a 20,000 frs. yearly pension direct from Louis Philippe's privy purse.[2]—These honours have not made me proud and I herewith, quite privately, re-dedicate my composition to you, notwithstanding it is already dedicated to Heine. You will know how to acknowledge this distinction and how to make the necessary declarations. Similarly I may tell you that I enthusiastically accept

[1] See the accompanying facsimile of this letter opposite.

[2] Wagner humorously disregards the fact that he had himself paid the printing expenses of the *Grenadiers* and that no notice was taken of it.

the private dedication of *your Grenadiers* and await the dedication copy. * * *

P.S. Don't pitch into Meyerbeer so vigorously. I have that man to thank for everything, and more especially for the fame so shortly to be mine. * *

53. TO HEINRICH LAUBE, LEIPZIG

PARIS, *13th March*, 1841.

* * * * For the rest, things are beginning to be in a bad way with me again. My misfortunes always begin with the beginning of spring. My work is coming to an end and I cannot hope for anything fresh. Added to this I am still not free of debt and unluckily I have to pay for the ignorance of French customs which led me to give notice of removal from my lodging eight days too late, so that my scheme of spending this summer cheaply in the country is rendered vain. I have still no answer from Brockhaus—oh, I know what people are! I have sent a few stories [1] to Lewald, who challenged me to it a year ago. My present journalistic work, useful as it otherwise is, brings in confoundedly little. The misery is that I am so totally unable to see what can bring me success as a musician. I must very seriously consider risking a decisive venture at the beginning of next winter. I must give a big concert with the *Conservatoire* orchestra and choir and produce my best things at it; otherwise they will never get to know me here. Only a favourable issue to my Dresden affairs, however, can enable me to do this. How long will that drag on!! Those people have had my business in hand three months and I have not yet got a single direct word out of them. * * *

Apropos! Perhaps you know of a good publisher? My friend Anders the librarian, the most learned musical philologist and historian in the world, has for some time been busy collecting most exhaustive and exact data about Beethoven and his works. He had already amassed a rich store when Schindler's book appeared, through which the extent of our knowledge of Beethoven has been immeasurably increased. It is generally agreed that this latest book has given us good material but yet it is far from being a true biography. Anders, who lacks a ready pen, has now offered to place all his *materia* in my hands if I will write the book and go halves with him. We are both agreed that it is to be an exhaustive history of Beethoven which, while avoiding pedantry and learned quotations, shall tell Beethoven's story in light, perhaps imaginative style and at the

[1] *A Visit to Beethoven* and *An End in Paris.*

same time discuss and define the great musical periods as their development can be traced in the sequence of the Master's works. It is to consist of two volumes of 30 sheets of Roman print, and from both aspects, as regards historical accuracy and as regards conscientious æsthetic criticism, it is to be complete and exhaustive, though lightly presented and made generally pleasantly readable. It should be a fine piece of work,[1] a means of improvement to oneself and in any case a profitable speculation for the bookseller. Anders wants to offer it to Brockhaus—I should prefer someone else. * * *

54. TO FERDINAND HEINE, DRESDEN

PARIS, 18*th March*, 1841.

* * * Quite recently my friend Laube of Leipzig brought to my notice certain remarks of Mme. Devrient * *, which * * show me more clearly than ever that the ultra-Catholic party are scandalised by the text of my *Rienzi*. I have taken the hint and have without delay informed Herr Hofrat Winkler of certain alterations on this point which I have long had prepared. I have drawn his attention to the fact that the question is rather one of Catholic externals than of Catholic ideas. I have pointed out to him that the Pope—who furthermore is not actually presented upon the stage—appears in my libretto not as a spiritual power upholding or condemning theses and dogmas, but rather as a temporal prince endeavouring to defend his earthly realm against pillage and anarchy, and it is only as such that he finally uses his ghostly power to rid himself of a too-zealous defender of his worldly interests. Rome itself being the scene of the drama, it is in any case historically impossible to substitute any other overlord for the Pope, but since the latter is only represented by his emissaries his participation is slurred over, and if I now consent to change these emissaries and a cardinal into ordinary temporal ambassadors, there ought to be practically no cause of scandal remaining except the Papal ban. Did they not, however, retain the essence and significance of the Papal ban in *The Jewess*[2] at Dresden, though shortening it considerably? Why not, then, here too, where it was decided from the first to cut the pronouncement of it as short as possible? There are such excellent ways of letting the main action work itself out at large, while cutting out just a few very obvious ceremonies and symbols. *The Huguenots* has been performed—what more can people want? For though in that piece the externals were very much covered up, the

[1] It was never executed. See No. 56.

[2] Opera by Halévy.

religious dogma theme was absolutely not to be disguised.—If, however, they are quite determined to eliminate the word "Church" from my *Rienzi* altogether, I suppose one must turn to the German Emperor and ask him to shoulder the burden and pronounce the ban himself as an Imperial decree. Surely, though, priests and religions have gone in solemn procession over the Dresden stage before now? * * *

* * * But what is the use of all this when these gentlemen will not favour me with one single direct communication! If they challenge me to it I shall certainly be able to remove every cause of offence. * * * Is it true that the only man who could be empowered to give an opinion on my musical composition [1] is opposed to my project?—— * * * *

I have been induced to follow up a suggestion of Herr Hofrat Winkler and to write him a series of letters [2] for his *Abendzeitung*.[3] * * * *

55. TO BARON VON LÜTTICHAU, DRESDEN

PARIS, *23rd March*, 1841.

Your Excellency may kindly remember having been troubled, some three months since, with a most humble communication [No. 51] of mine accompanying the score of an opera, *Rienzi*, which was the subject of my letter and the object of my petition. As since then I have not been honoured with any direct information as to how Your Excellency received this my humble petition, nor as to what Your Excellency has resolved thereupon, I could not entirely curb a feeling of suspense which at length drove me to take steps to obtain news. Herr Hofrat Winkler, whom I approached with that object, had the extraordinary kindness to inform me of the state of my affairs. I learned through him that they were held up chiefly on account of the misfortune of Your Excellency's having as yet received no libretto of my opera and being consequently under the necessity of obtaining one as a preliminary.

I cannot quite understand through what oversight this lapse in the conduct of my affairs could have arisen and must very keenly regret that to it I have to attribute the fact that my affairs have as yet reached no conclusion. I therefore make all the greater haste to repair this misfortune and may be permitted to send Your Excellency forthwith a copy of the libretto in question. * * *

[1] Kapellmeister Reissiger. See the end of Nos. 57 and 66.

[2] Wagner's newsletters to the *Dresdener Abendzeitung* have been easily accessible since 1914 in vol. xii. of the *Gesammelte Schriften*.

[3] *Evening News*.

On this occasion I also take the liberty of commenting to Your Excellency upon a certain portion of the text. It concerns the open participation of the Ecclesiastical Power in the decisive catastrophe of the dramatic action. Although not the slightest suggestion of dispute * * upon dogma or opinion arises * * yet I am given to reflect whether my opera is suitable for presentation at the Catholic Court of my Fatherland without some modification. —* * * However that may be, I have not neglected to prepare certain modifications beforehand which are calculated to allay every scruple. * * * *

56. TO AUGUST LEWALD, STUTTGART

PARIS, *1st April*, 1841.

* * When I lately sent you two stories [1] I told you that within a month I should be ready with some Parisian news. Since I received no countermand I take it that you will not object if I enclose something of the kind.[2] At the same time I take the liberty of enclosing also the three musical pieces for *Europa*.[3] * * *

Now for a large demand * *—I want you to provide a good publisher for an interesting book. Having been told that you are intimate with Herr von Cotta among others, you will pardon my importunity if I ask you to let him know about the following project and if possible try to persuade him to adopt it. * * * [4] The book * * is to be a biography of Beethoven, tracing the development of the great musical periods created by his genius, told in entertaining and perhaps fanciful style, so as to be as far as possible from being a thing of pedantic display and learned quotations, and more like a romance about an artist than a dry list of dates, although the deepest learning will underlie it. If you could * * * get the interest of Herr von Cotta or, if not his, some other intelligent bookseller's, for this project you would do an inestimable service. * * * *

57. TO THEODORE WINKLER, DRESDEN

PARIS, *8th April*, 1841.

* * * * Now * * let me come out with a few words on this extraordinary business of my opera. * * To my great surprise I learned that as good as nothing had been done in my affair since the general management had not been supplied with a copy of the

[1] See No. 53, note, p. 65.

[2] *Pariser Amüsements*, by V. Freudenfeur: *Europa* (1841), vol. ii., pp. 577–91.

[3] The romances *Dors mon enfant*, *Mignonne* and *Attente* were also published in this periodical.

[4] What follows is practically identical with the last paragraph of No. 53.

libretto. I immediately got a new libretto copied out and have sent it direct to Herr v. Lüttichau by stage-coach. I was glad to make this an opportunity of introducing the modifications of the Catholic party at once into the text of the libretto and hope therewith to have removed a great cause of stumbling. A few days ago I got a letter, too, from Herr Reissiger, whose kindly and most cordial advances have really cheered and refreshed me. He has studied the score of my opera and, so far as I can see, is not displeased with it. * * * *

58. TO MAURICE SCHLESINGER, PARIS

PARIS, *27th April*, 1841.

* * * * You really must again advance me 100 frs., my dearest Herr Schlesinger, otherwise I don't know how you will be able to stand before the Judgment Seat in the next world one day when it will be said, "Moritz Schlesinger, the benevolent and prudent Moritz Schlesinger, refused to advance 100 frs. to the *subsequently far-famed Richard Wagner*, and this, too, at a time when he was on the point of journeying to Russia, there to carry his glorious designs, under the gracious protection of the 'Favourite'[1] and the 'Guitarero,' to the uttermost parts of Asia!" Your imagination will doubtless make you shudder as you picture this scene and the happy result of the shudder will be that you will pay out the desired advance without delay.

I reckon upon it with the most amazing certitude! Just think, by next month, in glorious May, I can deliver the most magnificent goods—the wittiest aphorisms, the pithiest stories, all for the *Gazette* [*Musicale*], and these will go no little way towards raising your paper to a pinnacle of fame, so that some day in the distant future——

I can no more—I exhaust myself in poetic flights and all for 100 frs. so as to be able to get away! You will understand my anxiety. * * *

With deepest contrition, your most humble servant * * *

59. TO COUNT WILHELM VON REDERN, BERLIN

PARIS, *27th June*, 1841.

* * I humbly desire Your Excellency graciously to hear the petition which I have to make with reference to an opera of my own composition for which I seek the honour of *a first performance*

[1] *La Favorita*, an opera by Donizetti; *Le Guitarero* by Halévy.

at the Royal Court Theatre of Berlin. It is a small opera entitled *The Flying Dutchman,* not designed to occupy a *whole evening* but rather to be given with a *short ballet* or *little play.* I am arranging to have the libretto of the same dispatched to Your Excellency within a few days and no asseverations on my part are necessary to assure Your Excellency how happy I should think myself if both the idea and the execution of this work should seem worthy of Your Excellency's approbation.

For the rest I cannot but be convinced that my name as a composer is still unknown to Your Excellency and I therefore think it meet in this connection to refer Your Excellency to Herr Meyerbeer who, so far as I know, is at present staying in Berlin and to *whom I have the inestimable good fortune of being known personally.* I flatter myself that Herr Meyerbeer will not hesitate to give Your Excellency a favourable account of me. Should Your Excellency be able to decide to grant me the honour I seek for this opera, I would humbly desire Your Excellency to fix the performance of the same for the late autumn of this year, to the end that I may be able to send in the fully completed score at the close of this summer.[1] * * *

60. TO HIS MOTHER, JOHANNA GEYER, LEIPZIG

MEUDON, *12th September,* 1841.

MY DEAREST MOTHERLING!

* * * I am certainly not one of your stiff and unbending characters. On the contrary I might justly be accused of having a too feminine mobility of soul. But I have enough enduring passion not to give up an enterprise once tackled till I am convinced by the very nature of the case itself. So it has been with me in Paris. I have become firmly convinced that it is utterly impossible for me to fight my way through, at any rate as long as I have only my own strength to rely on for the battle. As to those who prophesied something like this to me, I answer them that their prophecies, based merely on hearsay, could have no weight with me, and since, on the contrary, a man like Meyerbeer encouraged me to take on the struggle no one need be surprised that I, as a young man, preferred to attempt it—rather than make a cowardly retreat without an effort. And Meyerbeer was right—what I lacked in personal strength and attributes—money and fame—might well be replaced by other things, and he offered himself to lend me a helping hand and to assist me with his great influence. The fact that Meyerbeer

[1] *The Flying Dutchman* was delayed in Berlin, as was *Rienzi* in Dresden.

was obliged to be away from Paris just the whole of this period was simply a piece of my predestined ill-luck, for influence from a distance is no use in Paris—personality is everything.

I was soon forced to see that I should have to carry on single-handed a battle I had undertaken in reliance on outside help, but I had to dare even *that* attempt. If I were one of those frivolous creatures of the present mode, had I some brilliant parlour trick or other, I might possibly have been able to push myself into some coterie which might finally have brought me to prominence without any real virtue on my part. Well may I say, thank God I was *not* made for that! I have had to despise men whom I have seen succeed in this way. I am myself possessed with such intense disgust for this kind of worthlessness that I am really glad to have acquired no flavour of it. All that remains for me in Paris now is to live penuriously upon the results of some drudgery I have found to do for a music publisher[1] here, and quietly await the time when fortune and circumstances lead me in the desired direction. I shall be obliged by sheer necessity to cling to this, if the good fortune which seems about to come to me elsewhere does not fulfil all it promises.

This piece of good fortune is the definite acceptance of my opera at Dresden. * * *

* * * Nowhere * *—not even in Berlin or Vienna—could I get a more distinguished personnel for the principal rôles of my *Rienzi* than in Dresden. Devrient and Tichatschek, I need say no more. In short, if God favours my plans this may mean the happy turning-point of my career.

I propose to go to Dresden some 14 days before the performance and so, my dearest little Mother, at last—at last I shall see you again. I am utterly horrified when I think that almost *six* years have elapsed since last I parted from you! Great God! who would have thought it? I shall meet you all again—all except my kind Rosalie!! Ah me! It was always a blessed thought to me that *she* who closely watched my growing pains, often with such tender participation, would also witness the happy issue of all my anguished strivings —and now I have to visit her grave! O my God, my God, keep my mother sound and well and leave her strength to rejoice in the prosperity of her children!

We shall not fail! Albert, too, will not, shall not, must not, cannot fail. May Fortune smile even on only one of us, for the happiness of one is that of all! Perhaps Heaven will make me the means and is preparing a place for me whence I can help Albert to his best hopes!— * * * *

[1] Maurice Schlesinger.

61. TO WILHELM FISCHER, DRESDEN

MEUDON, *14th October*, 1841.

* * * * I cannot deny that my opera [*Rienzi*] presents great scenic and musical difficulties in performance. * *

* * * I consider one of the greatest of them the effective division of the male chorus into the two groups, populace and nobles. * * * [1]

The choruses which are to be sung off the stage must necessarily, I suppose, be sung by the choir of the *Kreuzschule*. Anyhow, in planning both scenes I only reckoned on this material, since the first chorus is wanted to make a strong effect at the same time and this would be impossible if the theatre choir were to be divided.

The big tragic pantomime at the finale of the second act offers another difficulty. In my view the parts of the principal characters in it, Lucretia, Brutus, Tarquin and Collatinus, cannot possibly be taken except by actors accustomed to play similar characters in the spoken drama. * * *

Among all the many things which I think would repay discussion I will only mention the chorus of the heralds of peace at the beginning of the second act. This chorus is not an easy one to sing unaccompanied, so only those members of the female chorus who are most musical and have the best natural voices should, of course, be chosen for this number. * * * Nevertheless unaccompanied choral singing is seldom undertaken without the tone becoming flat before the end! It might be a good thing, if it can be remembered, to give the right pitch from time to time from the wings. * * * *

62. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG

PARIS, *16th December*, 1841.

MOST HONOURED SIR AND FRIEND!

I recently read in your *Zeitschrift für Musik* [2] a notice [3] about myself which struck me very much. In it you yourself expressed surprise at seeing mention of an opera of mine shortly to be produced at Dresden, in the Parisian *Courier Musical*. This interested me greatly because it showed me anew how nothing in the world, particularly in matters of journalistic advertisement, happens of itself, but that everyone who cares at all for his own interests must himself look after those interests. I really supposed that the preparations for the production of an opera by a Saxon at the Dresden Court Theatre *would* arouse a certain degree of interest, or at least that here and

[1] Cf. a letter (not in this collection) to Wilhelm Fischer, 8 December, 1841.
[2] *Musical Journal*. (TRANS.)
[3] In No. 13, of 13 August, 1841.

there someone would let fall a word about it, but I see now that from henceforth I must really take care myself to inform you, my excellent benefactor, of any project of mine the success of which means much to me, and ask for your kindly support. * * *

At the same time I send you a trifle [1] for your paper. I have not the slightest reason to conceal my name and signature in Germany but certain considerations force me to it in Paris. If you like I will soon send you something further. * * * *

63. TO THEODORE WINKLER, DRESDEN

PARIS, *12th March*, 1842.

The terrible deficiencies of the present production of the *Freischütz*, publicly denounced by myself,[2] have grown worse by the general indifference, so that the magnificent *Freischütz*[3] has sunk to the level of a miserable stop-gap used to fill up time on ballet nights. I tried in vain to put forward the view that the public might once more be attracted and even entranced by a benefit performance, produced with certain improvements, in favour of the immortal Master's heirs, but it is useless to talk enthusiastically to people who have never begun to understand the *Freischütz*. * * *

64. TO FERDINAND HEINE, DRESDEN

PARIS, *16th March*, 1842.

* * * * In any case, my good friend, I hope to see you soon. Paris is not the place for me at present and I am thirsting for German soil. Moreover my wife's state of health, which is not all that could be wished, makes it my duty to take her this summer to the baths at Teplitz which are recommended for her on all hands, and, taking one thing with another, it is important for me, too, to be rather nearer Dresden at present. Though I count extremely little on my personal influence in this affair of mine, it eases my mind to be at hand. I hope the latest decision to start rehearsals for my opera immediately upon Devrient's return will stand. * * * *

I am very unsettled in my mind about Reissiger. I have not received a word in answer to the number of letters I have sent him.

[1] An article on Rossini's *Stabat Mater* under the pseudonym "H. Valentino." Included by Wagner in vol. i. of the *Gesammelte Schriften*.

[2] In an article about the first performance in Paris on 7 June, 1841, which appeared in the *Dresdener Abendzeitung* of 20 June. A supplementary article appeared on 6 July.

[3] A secondary meaning of "Freischütz" in German is *floodgate*, so a pun is perhaps intended here.

I sent him and Herr Lewy a copy of a number of the *Gazette Musicale* [1] into which I had put a piece of advertisement for them both. I thought that would not displease Reissiger and might perhaps stir him up at last to give some sign of life. But he remains stiff and stark!

I hope *you* will keep living and warm. * * * *

[1] *Revue et Gazette Musicale*, 23 January, 1842 (p. 37). Lewy gave concerts in Paris. The puff for Reissiger dealt with the performance in Dresden of his opera *Adele von Foix*.

PART II

DRESDEN, 1842–1849

PART II

DRESDEN, 1842–1849

65. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW AND SISTER, EDWARD AND CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

BERLIN, 21*st April* [1842].

* *—Can it really be as much as 14 days since I left you—and I am only just writing to you! * * * I arrived here in the evening the day before yesterday, and yesterday wasted a whole day trying to meet Meyerbeer. * * *

* * * We have never found any leave-taking so hard as that from Paris. God! What are all the sufferings we endured there compared with the consciousness we carry away with us of a perfect and enduring friendship! What have you been doing with Minna?! You have quite changed her heart, and Paris seems a paradise to her now. She never stopped crying all through the journey. Even when she began to get a little calmer her only answer to the attempts at consolation which I felt I ought to make was, "May I cry again now?" Her relatives—everything—were quite indifferent to her, and when I left her to go to Dresden she told me quite simply that she was not crying over my departure, but because she did not know how she was to get back to Paris! Oh, my dears, believe me, I share her feelings. I am still very lukewarm in the conduct of my affairs, for my head is full of Paris and the good kind hearts there, which I know beat for me too. * * * —Minna is determined that things *shall* go ill with me so that I have to make a contract with Schlesinger and go back to Paris! The poor dear thinks of nothing but Paris. * * * *

* * * For the moment I can't do much here as the new manager, Küstner, has not arrived yet and (as Meyerbeer assured me would be the case) Redern neither can nor dare decide anything as to the date for the performance of my opera. It is pretty well all the same to me—I wish I were with you.—What I shall live on this summer I don't yet know. * * * *

* * * Write to us about Herr and Madame Kühne, whom I am not writing to now, as I am waiting for a time when I can do so with Minna. Assure them of the deep love and thanks with which we daily remember those excellent people. * * * *

66. TO THE SAME

DRESDEN, *3rd May*, 1842.

* * * At first, then, I was given a good shaking up in Berlin. It was of course impossible to fix a limit of time for the production of my opera, as Küstner was still on his travels. However, I got to know Herr von Redern, who made a great fuss of me, and fell in with my wishes so far as to promise provisionally to arrange the repertoire so that rehearsals of my opera should follow the performance of *The Huguenots*, which will come on at the end of May. So Küstner will have definitely to contravene present arrangements if he wants to shelve my *Dutchman* Anyhow he will not do this, for Mendelssohn (with whom I am on very friendly terms) assures me firstly that he is sure Redern will have the whip-hand for the first half of the year at any rate, and, secondly, that arrangements have been made to interest Küstner in my favour. But I shall consequently have to go again to Berlin and Leipzig in the middle of this month, which comes rather hard on me. My pecuniary affairs have taken shape in just the way I should have chosen. The best part of it is that it hasn't cost me a word. Louise, Ottilie and Hermann have put their heads together and decided (as they told me) that it was for them, without the intervention of any stranger, to advance me as much as I think necessary for my subsistence for the coming half-year, during which I can count on no income. * * * It is now finally settled that my *Rienzi* is to be produced here in August. Dear Edward is coming to it—I can pay my debt to him straight away from the honorarium, which will be something for the return journey. Can't it easily be managed? Your Edward need only give you a little money. We shall keep house together. Natalie could be lodged somewhere till then, could she not—perhaps with the good Kühnes? * * * I really have little to tell you about Dresden. People lionise me and will certainly do everything I want. Rehearsals of my opera will be begun early in July. In most quarters they wish me the luck to be able to be present, as that will have a good influence on the proceedings. Reissiger is perpetually hanging on my neck and devours me with kisses when he can get hold of me. Everyone assures me, too, that he really means fair by me and is full of good-

will. Unfortunately the fellow has become such a rank Philistine that I should be in a terrible way if I had to leave the artistic production of my opera in his hands alone. * * * *

67. TO KARL THEODORE VON KÜSTNER, BERLIN

DRESDEN, *17th May*, 1842.

* * The matter which I recently had the honour of explaining to you in Leipzig is * * of such great importance to me that I feel impelled to press you to reconsider it sympathetically before coming to a decision. * * *

* * * I may now * * take it that, the present management of the Royal Court Theatre of Berlin having passed a favourable verdict upon the merits of my opera, *The Flying Dutchman*, and *accepted it for production* at that theatre, you are already in a position to weigh the matter which I recently proposed. But although this verdict might favourably incline you to decide to produce my opera, I should feel I had no grounds for attempting to urge you to accelerate that production, were it not my very lively desire that the performance of my *Flying Dutchman* in Berlin should *precede* the imminent appearance in Paris next autumn of a work entitled *Le Vaisseau Fantôme* [by Louis Dietsch]. I take the liberty of writing to explain to you without loss of time the exact relationship between the two operas, and of informing you of the fact that the complete sketch-plan for the libretto of the *Vaisseau Fantôme* is a plagiarism from mine, and that the plot is based on that of my *Flying Dutchman*. You once said yourself that the circumstance of the libretto of a French opera being based in all its main outlines upon a German, was rare, if not in its kind unique, apropos of which I must be permitted to say, that this case presents a not disadvantageous contrast to the many other cases in which, contrariwise, Germans have felt it necessary to borrow operatic plots from their French neighbours. It may be fairly deduced that here is a subject somewhat out of the ordinary; also that the man who conceived it is the best man to carry it out, particularly when the result of his work has proved acceptable to the Berlin Court Theatre.

As stated above, the opera composed upon this subject by a Frenchman under the title of *Le Vaisseau Fantôme* is to be produced in Paris this autumn, and the unfortunate custom still prevailing among our German theatrical managers of having French pieces translated with the greatest expedition and giving them at once at their theatres makes it probable that if this piece has any success

in Paris it will immediately appear on the German stage. Yet since I have preserved my intellectual integrity and carried out in my native tongue a subject conceived by myself and set it to music, my opera, if it had the good fortune to be produced in advance of the other at the first theatre in Germany, would, I believe, arouse the public interest in a purely German product and the French version, a hotch-potch in any case, would attract little notice.

* * * Being in possession of these facts in advance, you will now be fully aware that you have in your hands the fate of a work whose not entirely commonplace merits are vouched for, not indeed by my name, but by the facts to which I have called your attention. The furtherance of my interests entrusted to you, though but a small part of the interests of the whole world of German art, may yet be regarded as an earnest of your noble purpose of raising the status of the despised German opera and, being appreciated as such, cannot fail to make a deep impression upon all my German fellow-artists, since the special circumstances of this case must sooner or later become public knowledge. * * * *

68. TO SAMUEL LEHRS, PARIS

TEPLITZ, *12th June*, 1842.

* * * So you are writing books for children? Good luck to you! What childishness would one not indulge in for 500 francs! I have been writing for the [*Dresdener*] *Abendzeitung, all in vain.* Do you know, dearest Brother Lehrs, your letter has quite relieved my mind about you? All through it I can see your independent manly spirit, proving to me that a sluggard's life is not the summit of earthly bliss. With what delicate sensibilities we are endowed, you and I, for this rough-and-tumble life, so that we can revel in the warmth of the weakest ray of sunshine, while whole oceans of light get no response but sweat from the usual run of fools. Ah, how happy we are while we can find a grain of inner satisfaction, and how I shudder when I think that I was once given up to a banal, boring "happiness" where—instead of in hens and goats—I had to seek satisfaction in people with handles to their names and—asses! Laube has become such an one! * * *

My future lies in the hands of the theatrical robber band. God enlighten their Excellencies and open their hearts to virtue. Amen

* * * Paris, Dresden or Schilda—it's all much the same to me now, if I know my own heart. I don't care for Paris—I doubt if I can love any placé in the world. My heart finds no refreshment in men and buildings—I want nature—and friends. * * *

* * * I have no geographical preferences and, as for my Fatherland, apart from its lovely ranges of hills, vales and woods, I rather dislike it than otherwise. They are an accursed people, these Saxons, greasy, paunchy, ill-bred, lazy and coarse—what have I to do with them? The apparent patriotism of my last letter [1] was all right for Kietz, though for the matter of that he has passed from provincialism to cosmopolitanism in Paris. * * *

69. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

TEPLITZ, 13*th June*, 1842.

DEAREST AND BEST!

Here we are at Teplitz, the castle hill before our noses, a cowbyre beneath our feet. Here we sit and think of you—of you! * * * *

Oh, this Teplitz and the country for far around is the fairest thing I know! * * * Mother and Minna have met here for the first time, naturally with the bearing of two people who want to get to know each other. Mother seems very happy in our society. * * * *

* * * I went to see Albert in Halle and found him better than I expected. Rather too much has been made of his "stage-struck" state in Leipzig. I slept with him two nights and had long and intimate talks with him. He must get a better position in time, that is clear, but one thing somewhat reassured me, *he gets his salary all right!* One knows what that means. His wife is as beautiful as ever. Johanna is quite a good comedienne *and* has a voice which, under Albert's training, justifies high hopes. * * * *

70. TO KARL THEODORE VON KÜSTNER, BERLIN

TEPLITZ, 14*th June*, 1842.

* * * * As far as I can gather from various sources, you intend to offer the Berlin public Herr Lachner's very popular grand opera, *Catarina Cornaro*, as the first brilliant item upon your newly selected repertoire. Every German artist will recognise this arrangement as thoroughly worthy of you and of the institution you direct. To stage this important work worthily, however, I feel sure, from my knowledge of the condition of the Berlin Opera when it was made over to you, that very considerable preparations, purchases, etc. will have to be made. * * In the meantime a *comparatively modest* little work like mine [*The Flying Dutchman*] might well be embodied in an *interim repertoire* and I would ask you to take into account that the reason I suggest this possibility is that my opera (which,

[1] Cannot be traced.

on account of its brevity, is not intended to fill a whole evening [1] but to be given—in the Opera House at any rate—with a short play) could seem to have no pretensions to a leading rôle on your repertoire. It could be offered very simply as a little novelty and if it should happen to please, well and good for everyone. * * *

I may say in favour of such an arrangement that musical rehearsals of my opera would require a minimum of time and trouble, since it is short, has practically no big *ensembles* and, apart from a few small choruses, consists almost wholly of numbers which the individual singers can easily rehearse for themselves. Furthermore, the present members of the Berlin Opera are quite sufficient to fill the few rôles of my *Flying Dutchman*. * * * The scenic effects at the last change of scene may perhaps need some attention, but I should have thought that a first performance [2] of my opera could easily be achieved in the course of September, or even towards the end of August. * * * *

71. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, STAYING AT TEPLITZ

DRESDEN, *Monday, 25th July*, 1842.

* * * * I have Reissiger in my pocket now—I have presented him with my operatic subject, the *Hohe Braut*. When I read it to him yesterday he was quite carried away—all fire and flame [3]; he is to be very industrious in return!

* * * * On coming home yesterday evening from the theatre I found an unfranked letter from Paris which cost me sixteen groats. It was from Troupenas,[4] reminding me in the friendliest possible way about those musical arrangements. I sat down at once and worked till twelve o'clock at night to finish the arrangements. * * * *

72. TO THE SAME

[DRESDEN, 28*th July*, 1842], *Thursday, 9 o'clock in the morning.*

MY DEAREST WIFE,

* * * It grieves me very much to think that you mean to leave me alone [5] so much longer! Dear Minna, we really ought not to be

[1] See No. 50.

[2] The performance did not take place till 7 January, 1844.

[3] Reissiger, however, did not compose upon this libretto.

[4] This letter is the sole source of our knowledge of the fact that Wagner did hack-work (as early as 1842, moreover) for this Parisian publisher. He also worked for Schlesinger at that time.

[5] It appears that Minna wished to follow her husband's mother, who was ill, from Teplitz to Leipzig for a time; one might almost suppose that she also wished to take a situation and earn something while her husband had no regular post.

separated for such a long time, I feel that again deeply and intensely. What is a whole capital, with its 70,000 inhabitants, to me, compared with what you are? When I have nothing to do I am miserable alone, and when I am tired with a long day's work and come home at evening to a house empty of you, I hate the fireside which I find so restful else. And yet away from the house there is nothing to compensate me for a moment. One passage in your letter I cannot quite understand. You speak of the possible necessity of our being separated longer. Where is the necessity? When I was pursuing the soaring hopes and plans (which you never shared with me) and left Russia under conditions which might have frightened the stoutest-hearted man, * * did you *then* talk of the necessity of parting from me? By God, I should have had to acknowledge you right then! But it never so much as occurred to you. When storm and danger were at their height, when you saw nothing but a horrible death before you as reward for all the hardships lived through with me, you only begged me to hold you very close in my arms so that we might not sink *apart* into the deep! When, in Paris, we hovered on the verge of starvation *you* had more than one chance of saving yourself. One word and Frau von Zech, who loved you so much, would have taken you with her to Gotha—Leplay herself forgot her stinginess for you and would have taken you back home as her travelling companion. Why didn't you talk *then* of a necessity for separating? You see I could have answered you nothing, then. But now, when I feel increasingly that I hold my future in my hands, now I ask why you talk of this necessity? Tell me, what makes you so faint-hearted? * * * *

73. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW AND SISTER, EDWARD AND CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, 11*th September*, 1842.

* * * * As to Cecilie's jokes on the subject of babies—there is nothing to the fore. We have no prospects of any *human* infancy, so we must do the best we can with *dogs*. We have another now, just six weeks old, a funny little beast, called Peps or "Striezel" [1] because he looks like a puppy from a Striezel stall. He is better than the last, Robber, but it's a bad business that we have to put up with such mindless creatures. I would much rather have a Maxel [2]—but *that* could only happen once in the world. * * *

[1] A kind of bun.

[2] The Avenarius's little son.

74. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, EDWARD AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, *8th October*, 1842.

* * * * Yes, dearest Edward, on the 19th the Devil will be loose with lightning and tempest. I must say I look forward with delight to this performance [of *Rienzi*] for it is going to be *excellent*! Singers and orchestra are rehearsing with something more than enthusiasm. On all sides I get loud applause and there is every expectation of an extraordinary success. It must be seldom that anyone upon a similar venture can say, "I have not yet come across a single ill-wisher." Leading singers who have only unimportant rôles in my opera and were therefore somewhat sullen at the beginning soon caught fire with the rest and are now working as zealously as if they had the fattest of parts. The cry of the orchestra is, "Here at last is a task which really rewards endeavour." Devrient, in spite of hoarseness and indisposition, has come to every rehearsal without exception and by the enthusiasm with which (I am told) she talks about it everywhere she goes, is contributing not a little to creating credit in advance for my opera with the public, so that the performance is awaited with tension as if it were something quite extraordinary. Tichatschek vows "Rienzi" will be his most brilliant part because he gets more opportunities to display himself than in any other. The only one who might feel jealous of me, Reissiger, seems lost to all egotistic considerations in his personal affection for me. At any rate he conducts himself all the time, particularly behind my back, in a way which makes it impossible to harbour any suspicions of him. * * * *

75. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW AND SISTER, EDWARD AND CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, *21st October*, 1842.

* * * I would really rather you heard of it from someone else—for I must tell you that *never*, as they all assure me, has any opera been received for the first time in Dresden with such enthusiasm as my *Rienzi*. There was an uproar, a *revolution*, throughout the town. I was called tumultuously *four* times. They tell me that Meyerbeer's success with the performance of his *Huguenots* here was not to be compared with my *Rienzi's*. The second performance is to be the day after to-morrow—and every seat is booked already for a third. I am terribly exhausted and unstrung. After the second performance I will write to you *fully*. The performance was entrancingly lovely —Tichatschek—Devrient—everything—everything at a pitch of perfection never known here before. Triumph! Triumph! * * * *

76. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, *3rd November*, 1842.

* * * * The Dresden general management have commissioned me to send them with all speed the score of my other opera, *The Flying Dutchman*, as they intend to put it on at once,—immediately after *Rienzi*. As it is in a quite special genre (the purely romantic) and can be rehearsed very rapidly I have agreed, and it will be produced by the beginning of December—anyhow earlier than in Berlin where Lachner's opera has to come on first before they can proceed to mine. If only I could transfer the performance of my opera from Dresden to Leipzig! * * * *

77. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW AND SISTER, EDWARD AND CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, *6th November*, 1842.

TO MY DEAR ONES IN PARIS!

Which of you in particular shall I write to? Shall I give each of you a certain piece of the news? Shall I pretend I have a secret to impart to the one which the other is to know nothing of? Call the holy Council of Five [1] together, give Cecilie the honour of precedence —you owe her that in any case as the only woman among you— and hear how it goes with your brother! * * * The most remarkable thing to me is the *endurance* of the public. I cut it as short as possible, yet the opera lasts till ten-thirty and as far as we know there has not been an empty place at any performance. Everyone has listened with absolutely rapt attention till the last fall of the curtain. And that means something in Dresden. While I was busy with the cutting down I made some odd discoveries. The singers said, "Yes, it's dreadfully trying," but no one wanted anything cut out. I begged Tichatschek on my knees to let something be taken out of his terribly exacting part but—no possibility! Always the same answer, "No, it is too heavenly. It is too heavenly!"—

After all this I was really excited about my honorarium. Everyone guessed fabulous totals—now the takings for the first three performances were to be mine—now I was to have 2000 thalers in no time, etc. Instead of all this, after the third performance I got a letter from His Excellency stating in the most flattering terms that "for my most excellent and beautiful work" he sent me an honorarium of 300 thalers, "although the usual honorarium for an opera is only 20 louis d'or"; he could, however, "not resist making an exception in my case as an additional means of assuring me of

[1] The Avenarius couple, Kietz and Lehrs.

his thanks." You see, then, how it is as long as one has to leave such things to the generosity of a manager. My one comfort is that I know a change is coming and another time on a similar occasion *I* shall be able to make *demands*. Well, my dear children, with these my first takings I cannot help anyone very much, for firstly I must at once pay my debts to Brockhaus out of it, secondly my old Magdeburg creditors are threatening me with actions and I shall have to quiet them as well as I can. Then our own personal equipment, shirts, underlinen, etc., is in an indescribable condition and urgently calls for renewals, etc. But after such a fabulous success it is unthinkable that my finances should remain where they are. I hope soon at least to be able to sell the score in certain other places and I shall not long lack a good publisher [1] who will pay me properly. With these expectations, which are certainly not frivolous, I hope to console you and my Parisian creditors for a short while longer and I promise to allot my next takings exclusively to them! It is unthinkable that I shall have to await them long. *So, with a good conscience, you can comfort anyone you see pining after me!!!* * * * *

78. TO HIS BROTHER, ALBERT WAGNER, BALLENSTÄDT

DRESDEN, *3rd December*, 1842.

* * * * Every day I get business letters and many of them are still unanswered. The most depressing part is the *invitations*. Formerly no crow crowed after me, but now I can see no way out of it, particularly as my friends assure me I ought to go everywhere. In short I am "the mode" here. The demand for me has been brought to a still higher pitch by the sudden death [2] of poor Rastrelli. All eyes at once looked to me as his successor in office. It has been spoken of at Court and Lüttichau has had me sounded. I am still very much in two minds, as I would naturally like to remain free for the next few years. I am now at my prime, with my creative powers at their freshest. I have already drafted two new operatic subjects [3] and could compose them within two years if I remained free. I assert that I would willingly buy this freedom at the price of a few pecuniary troubles, and, besides, I can now rely

[1] This hope was also disappointed.

[2] Reissiger's fellow-kapellmeister Morlacchi died on a journey home, undertaken for health's sake, at Innsbruck on 28 October, 1842; the conductor who followed, Rastrelli, also died unexpectedly on 14 November.

[3] *The Saracen Woman* (which never got beyond a rough sketch) and *Tannhäuser*.

on making many a nice little sum out of my two finished operas. Really, things move very slowly and deliberately with us here in Germany. I am too great a surprise to all the theatres, and I shall have to wait a little longer before they find time to put me into their repertoires. * * * Meanwhile, though I am already snapping up a bit here and there, my old debts hang about my neck, particularly the Magdeburg debts, and I can see that the time of freedom from money difficulties is still far ahead. Consequently, a few days ago, I spoke my mind to Lüttichau and told him that while it had been my personal wish to remain free as yet, I found something very alluring in the prospect of having so exceptional an *ensemble* at my disposition for high artistic ventures as the Dresden Opera offered me, and so could the more easily abandon my previous resolution. Since, however, a subordinate standing, such as Rastrelli occupied, afforded no such prospect, I could not consider the vacant post. Hereupon Lüttichau declared that he had no intention of making a fresh appointment upon the terms under which Rastrelli had held the post. He could no longer rely confidently upon Reissiger on account of his slackness and ineptitude, so he proposed to appoint a second kapellmeister, a colleague with at least equal privileges. So now I stand like Hercules at the parting of the ways. Everyone who has merely my material well-being in view will naturally say "Take it"! But is that really all there is to it?——

* * * * How are the children getting on? I often talk of you and Johanna here. Let me have Johanna's repertoire in writing. All kinds of people make their débuts and try their fortunes here. Why shouldn't a beginner, who promises so much under your tuition, attract notice? Well, time brings wisdom.— * * * *

79. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, *3rd January*, 1843.

MOST HONOURED FRIEND!

Since I know you take an interest in me I write in the joy of my heart to tell you that I yesterday achieved a triumphant success with my opera, *The Flying Dutchman*, of which I am prouder than of the success of *Rienzi*, because in this new opera I strike out a way markedly different from anything to which the public is at present accustomed. I and all my friends foretold a marked success for the opera when once the public had had time to get to know it, but all our expectations were exceeded by the immediate acclamation of this first performance. After the second and third acts I received wildly enthusiastic calls with the singers. Devrient in her part

achieved what is perhaps her most original piece of work. Her success was tremendous, the audience turning hot and cold by turns in sympathy. * * * *

80. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, *5th January*, 1843.

* * * * Lüttichau has again told me that he has it in mind to appoint me kapellmeister with a salary of 1800 thalers, only I should first have to serve a probationary year as director of music with a salary of 1200 thalers. I have written to him this afternoon to tell him I cannot and will not accept. What he will decide now I do not know. I have made up my mind, however, not to sacrifice my freedom except for a really big appointment. Of course I know I am laying up a further period of care and want for myself by so doing, but that ought not to frighten such as I. * * * In the interval, however, while awaiting better things, it has been a great matter for me to have at last found someone—and without seeking, too—willing to lend me 1000 thalers in solid cash on the sole security of my honest face and my promise to repay when I am in flourishing circumstances. This person is none other than—Devrient! She learned of my circumstances, my obligations and my debts and repeatedly, of her own accord, offered me the 1000 thalers, till at last I accepted them. It is amazing—and I tell you that quite apart from this I respect and honour Devrient immeasurably. She is a truly noble and great-hearted woman. * * * I destine something like half the sum Devrient has lent me for Paris and am writing of it more fully to Edward. With the other half I shall try to get clear of my old debts in Magdeburg. It will not be easy, for those people are out for blood and threaten every moment to compromise my present honourable position. To pay all they demand inclusive of interest and costs would take 657 thalers. I am not spending one groat of the 1000 thalers on myself.—

* * * *Rienzi* is now to be cut in half and given on two evenings. Much had to be cut because of its length, but now these cuts are to be restored so as to deprive the public of none of it. Judge from this whether the opera pleases! * * * As regards Natalie, we have made up our minds. You must please be so good as to bring her here with you at our expense. You will then be free of her and she can then go to her sister [1] [Charlotte Tröger] at Zwickau, which will be the best place for her.

[1] Natalie was still known as Minna's sister, not as her daughter.

What are Herr and Madame Kühne doing? For the love of Heaven give them a million most affectionate greetings from us. We shall never cease to remember them with emotion. * * * *

81. TO J. P. SAMUEL SCHMIDT, BERLIN

DRESDEN, *9th January*, 1843.

* * * * Since you wish it I hasten, now that the third performance of my *Flying Dutchman* is over, to render you a concise account of the facts of its success.[1]

I enclose a copy of the libretto from which you will see how entirely this opera differs from *Rienzi* in genre, and further, how unlike it is in all essentials to what this present-day public of ours expects the ordinary opera to be. You will find that I have allowed a primitive saga to tell itself, quite simply, without the addition, as is usually thought necessary nowadays, of anything "operatic" in the commonly accepted sense. The Frenchman[2] who has worked up a sketch upon this plot (knowingly plagiarised from me) has quite destroyed the exquisite fragrance of the saga by introducing the kind of episodes common to all French operas of the day. I believe I have solved my problem by far simpler dramatic treatment, but cannot pretend to ignore the fact that it was a very daring thing to present our great public with something so foreign to their expectations. I have put in no pageantry, no noisily effective finale, etc. I had made up my mind to face the fact that it would take several performances to accustom the public to what I had to offer. I was so much the more joyfully surprised when a brilliant success was assured from the first performance and I found I had succeeded in winning my public forthwith. * * * *

82. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, *27th January*, 1843.

* * * I am just on the point of sending the score of my *Flying Dutchman* back to Berlin where it is to be performed, but I cannot resist the temptation of holding it back a few days to send it first to you. * * * What I chiefly desire is that you should understand my tendency; if you should then wish to write a detailed account[3] of my music, it rests with you.

Just as I have wished *you* at Dresden I have wished *myself* at

[1] Cf. the still more circumstantial account in a letter to Ferdinand Heine (July 1843).

[2] Paul Foucher.

[3] Schumann did not do so. See No. 83.

Leipzig in order to get to know your music. You could not respond to the wish and neither can I. Then resort to the shift which I have resorted to! Send me your music! I will study it with zeal and exactitude and—if you like—will write [1] a detailed account for any paper you consider suitable—perhaps for the *Elegante*. My good friend, let us hold together! Who knows what good it may lead to, particularly if, as I hope, our artistic tendencies converge.

And now for something else! I grieve for this beautiful Dresden with its splendid artistic equipment. It seems such waste to me that it has no vital journalistic outlet. I belong here now. * * * I am to be kapellmeister with full salary, as Morlacchi was, and enjoy the special privilege of at once becoming kapellmeister in fact, whereas formerly every kapellmeister, even Weber himself, had to serve a year as director of music upon a lower salary.

* * * * I have recently been in Berlin. * * Things are at a low ebb there and my conviction is that nothing artistically considerable will ever come to fruition there. There is demoralisation from above—everything is *half* done! It sickened me.

Is Leipzig flourishing? Will the School of Music bear good fruit? It is to be hoped so. Ah, my dear people, learn above all things a little antipathy to music so that such appalling numbers of you won't go in for it! * * * *

83. TO THE SAME

DRESDEN, *25th February*, 1843.

* * * * The short visit your dear wife paid the Dresdeners should have been longer and it should have been made in your company. I particularly wish you could have given a big public musical conversazione here and made people hear some of your things, especially your new quintet [Op. 44]. I should be delighted for you to see for yourself that the public taste here is no longer hopelessly prejudiced against you. The age of Bellini-ism is quite past here. * * * It is not surprising that in a place where nothing but an *Italian* opera existed for a long period a preference for Italian music should still live on, particularly when a Schröder-Devrient, finding no material for her tremendous dramatic powers in new *German* works, threw herself into the presentation of Bellini rôles with constrained enthusiasm. She charmed people everywhere else in these parts—and here too.

But now, since this preference even in our artistes has at last

[1] At that time Wagner had written something about Schumann either in the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, or elsewhere.

given way to disgust and they turn to the study of more genuine music with extraordinary zest, the public too has shown itself willing and eager to accept the tendency towards a higher level of taste. There has been a genuine change here and a demand is universally expressed for a higher type of æsthetic enjoyment, but this is the point at which it must be admitted that our lovers of art are in a difficult position. We have nothing here at all comparable to your Gewandhaus[1] Concerts; the sole miserable substitutes are subscription concerts got up by the conductor of a military band, but they are attended by our public with an interest which might easily find a more worthy object. Our orchestra can at present do nothing to meet the public demand for more frequent performances of really good instrumental works, owing to an abuse which must in any case shortly be removed. For the moment we have only our operatic productions to boast of and, as far as that goes, a mere glance at our repertoire cannot fail to convince you that the day of Bellini-ism is past. * * *

Let me also say that it speaks at least for the earnestness of our public that such a composition as my *Flying Dutchman* was so warmly received here. Your remarks on this work after having gone through the score, go to confirm this statement of mine, for the objections you advanced on the ground of its gloomy colouring (and which I acknowledge as well founded) would properly have led one to suppose that such a work would never do *here*. Since, however, the public appreciates this work more and more the oftener it is heard,[2] I think I may not unsuitably cite it to give you a better opinion of the radical change in taste which is constantly spreading here.

For the rest I agree with everything which—according to your present knowledge of it—you have to say of my opera. Only one thing startles me and—I admit it—incenses me, and that is that you calmly tell me that I often have a flavour of *Meyerbeer*! Really, I simply cannot conceive what in this wide world *could* be called "Meyerbeerish" except, perhaps, the artful attempt to win a shallow popularity. * * * If, indeed, there were anything real and self-consistent which could be called of the spirit of Meyerbeer, in the sense in which one may speak of the spirit of Beethoven—or even, if you like, of the spirit of Rossini—I submit that it could still only be by some amazing freak of nature that I could draw upon a source of which the least whiff wafted from afar nauseates me. It is no more nor less than a death sentence upon my creative power and the

[1] Cloth Hall.

[2] A mistake of Wagner's. On that occasion *The Flying Dutchman* was performed only four times and was next revived in Dresden in 1865.

fact that you can pronounce it shows me clearly that you still have no really impartial opinion of me but only one deduced from the knowledge that circumstances have brought me into certain relations with Meyerbeer the *man*, for which I owe him a debt of gratitude.

As regards a publicly established verdict on my work, I am very glad of the prospect of soon seeing my operas made widely known by performance, for the pronouncements of local criticism here have, unfortunately, not a farthing's value either to me or to the cause of truth in general. * * *

Your quintet * * pleased me very much. I asked your dear wife to play it twice. The first two movements in particular still run through my head. If I had heard the fourth movement first I think perhaps I might have liked it better. I see what you are aiming at and assure you it's my aim too. *Beauty!* In it alone is salvation. * * *

84. TO SAMUEL LEHRS, PARIS

DRESDEN, *7th April*, 1843.

* * * * I shall only be able to make an occasional excursion this summer, for I have bowed myself to the yoke. But I will not murmur for the yoke is light, and even where it galls me it is growing easier. I am treated here with a respect such as has certainly not been the lot of any other in the same position. Half a year ago I was still a vagabond, not knowing where to turn next, and now I have an appointment for life with a fine salary, the prospect of a steady increase of the same and a sphere of operations far more spacious than most. It has been made no secret that I am expected to effect a truly artistic re-organisation of musical life here, with the result that any proposals of mine are adopted unreservedly, a fact which no little increases the estimation in which I am held, especially as people have long been accustomed to seeing Reissiger utterly powerless. Another director of music [1] has, moreover, been appointed now, lest my time should be too much taken up with business. I can ask no more. The first opera not my own which I rehearsed was Gluck's *Armide*. People were beside themselves over my interpretation of this music, so far removed from that of our own day, and over the nuances which I was able to suggest to the orchestra and singers. During the opera the King (an honest man without self-importance and who means what he says) conveyed me his thanks and the highest encomiums. He has a real good-hearted liking for me, so that I am sure that if, for instance, I asked

[1] August Röckel.

sometime for long leave of absence I should only have to say that I wanted it for the completion of a new composition and I should get it at once. You see my post is a really pleasant one, and I come more and more to see that I greatly needed something of the kind. Without it all the success of my operas would not have been sufficient for me to live on. I realise with horror how low is our national sense of honour in this matter of dramatic music also. The results of the long period when our theatres were open exclusively to French and Italian music are still felt even now when Frenchmen and Italians have quite lost their credit. If ever an operatic performance caused a sensation in Germany that of my *Rienzi* did. I am constantly receiving proofs that it has been discussed, verbally and in print, in the farthest corners of Germany, and yet not a manager in the country has up till now made serious preparations to give the opera! * * * Because I understand the basis of this evil I shall not despair, but shall exert myself vigorously to overcome it in time. It will be a slow business, but it shall and must be done. But no more Paris for me! I shall let that alone for ever. We operatic composers cannot be *European*, that is to say, we must either be *German* or *French*! One can see now what harm a tomfool like Meyerbeer does us. One foot in Berlin, and one in Paris, he achieves nothing anywhere, least of all in Berlin. I cannot describe how horribly bad things are there. That's the result of trying to trim one's sails to all winds, like friend Giacomo! God knows when anything will come of my *Dutchman* there. Yesterday Meyerbeer wrote to me that it was to come out in May—the lousy rascals! For the rest, I have sold this opera to two theatres already, Cassel and Riga, to the first for 20 louis d'or, to the second for 15. You see how modestly I have to begin. But it won't go on like that! I am still not financially straight, I have such a lot of stupid expenses. I have now got to have a court uniform made at the cost of about 100 thalers! Isn't it insensate? I have not yet looked for publishers for my operas. I will wait first for them to become known on other stages, and then the music dealers will have to pay me properly. For the present I must still go softly. What the Leipzigers think of me you can see from the *Musikalische Zeitung* of Leipzig. This organ of Mendelssohn's has so far said hardly one word about my operas! I have it from a trustworthy source that Mendelssohn (who now means to compose an opera) is more than jealous of me, and the Leipziger clique who follow Mendelssohn implicitly don't know what sort of face to pull at me—the asses! Still, Heaven grant that Mendelssohn brings out a good opera—there will be two of us then and two can do more than either alone. You blame me for letting myself go

about Berlioz, etc., in my autobiography[1]? I must first of all tell you as to that, that what I wrote was not intended for print. It was to serve as a note for my biographer, and I have put myself down in all my nakedness so that he should know where he was with me. I was myself surprised by the publication of what I wrote. But, for the rest, why should I stand on ceremony with Berlioz? He assuredly has not deserved it of me—as he proved here in Dresden where it was gall to him to see the success of my operas. He is an unhappy fellow, and I certainly would not have written anything against him had I first been present at the concerts he gave here! * * * *

The libretto of the *Venusberg*[2] is finished. It will be composed this summer. Everyone here is already in expectation of the opera. * * * *

85. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, *8th April*, 1843.

* * * Are you really still in doubt as to our plans for Natalie? I have already begged you to advance the cost of her return journey to Leipzig. The sooner this journey can be made the better pleased we shall be, because you will the sooner be relieved of a great burden and because we cannot see the use of Natalie's remaining in Paris any longer. That we ever let her come to Paris was a mistake, although we believed it would be a help to her parents. That we were obliged to leave her there at our departure in order to facilitate our own return journey was a matter of necessity, but now that we have found the best and most suitable place for Natalie with her sister[3] Charlotte [Tröger], and that we can easily bear the cost of her return, it would be madness to think of her staying longer in Paris. If Natalie has not learned French in Paris she can comfort herself with Kietz or, for that matter, with me, but the idea that she can ever be of use to herself and the world by acquiring the French tongue is a piece of sentimental folly, as she would see if she would submit her *German* letters to a cold-blooded examination. Natalie's best chance of happiness lies in a circle which, honourable and satisfactory as it may be, has nothing at all in common with the French language. Pack her things as soon as possible. * * * *

One of my perpetual interruptions! It is Easter time and I have to be in church several times a day, so that I have not yet been able to complete this. * * * I don't think there is much to be made

[1] "Autobiographical Sketches," in *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, 1843, Nos. 5 and 6.
[2] The original title of *Tannhäuser*. Cf. *My Life*, p. 363.
[3] See No. 80, note 1, p. 88.

of Albert. I would very much like to get him a singing master's post, independent of the theatre, and a good opportunity now offers through Pohlenz's death. Inquiries were made here from Leipzig as to whether we knew of a good teacher of singing for the new Leipzig School of Music and for teaching in Leipzig generally. I immediately saw that Albert's name was put forward and wrote to him, leaving him free to treat for the post as he wished, explaining all its advantages, for his daughter's future too, and zealously urging him to think of it as the turning-point of his career. He sent me a most subdued and despondent answer, saying he feared he was not good enough for the post but, chiefly, that he did not think he could live without the theatre. That is the worst of it—he loves this d——d theatrical life. I don't know now what he will do. But I hope he will bring Johanna on properly. I expect much of her and have an eye on her for Dresden. For the rest, things are not going *badly* with Albert now. * * * *

86. TO BARON VON LÜTTICHAU, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, *2nd May*, 1843.

Your Excellency was yesterday kind enough to accept my undertaking to make it my primary concern diligently to order my relations with the royal orchestra so that there should be no further occasion for complaints, whether well- or ill-grounded on that score, and, further (particularly during Your Excellency's absence), to alter nothing in the hitherto accepted interpretation of tempo, etc., when conducting older operas, even when it goes against my artistic judgment, leaving myself nevertheless free, when studying newer operas, to exercise my best judgment with the object of getting as perfect a presentation as possible. After quiet consideration of this my undertaking (the honourable fulfilment of which should, by all reasonable conjecture, be able to allay recent misunderstandings) I feel it necessary to add a few words of explanation, both to acquaint Your Excellency more exactly with the nature of most of the accusations brought against me and at the same time to justify myself in my character as an artist more fully than I was able to do yesterday, when, not only was I roused to the point of forgetfulness of the demeanour proper in Your Excellency's presence by several of Herr Lipinski's insinuations, but also found it impossible, on account of the latter's constant and pointless interruptions, to give the quiet and considered explanations necessary for this justification of myself.

What has principally embittered Herr Lipinski, in common with many other members of the Royal Chapel, against me since our

thoroughly successful and indeed unusually harmonious and enthusiastic co-operation at the rehearsals and performances of the opera *Armide*, was made perfectly plain to Your Excellency by himself, being in fact merely envy of the praises lavished on me in all quarters. * * * After the performances of *Armide* I had no important occasion to work with the orchestra until the rehearsal for *Don Juan*. Up till then no fault could be found with the results of my efforts, but the production of *this* opera, which for many reasons with which I had no concern may be called a failure, was seized upon as an opportunity for attacking my method of conducting it, and the pretext was found in certain alterations which I am said to have introduced in far greater numbers than was actually the case. Herr Lipinski disputes my right and my artistic authority for introducing these changes, taking up his stand chiefly on the infallibility of the traditional and customary interpretations of older operas in vogue here. I have but one convincing answer to this assertion. When Your Excellency set me the task of conducting *Euryanthe*, the widow of its immortal creator bade me to an interview, in the course of which she protested that at last the public had once more been able to hear this music as *Weber* intended it to be, for violations of tempo, etc., had gradually crept in which for her often completely distorted whole passages of the work. She directed me for exact information of the tempi as Weber intended them to be to Madame Schröder-Devrient, who, as you know, holds in faithful memory the spirit of the first performance under Weber. Madame Schröder-Devrient fully confirmed Frau von Weber's assertions. Your Excellency can see from this how an opera originally studied in a certain place, by a certain orchestra, under the composer, can within twenty years vary greatly from the first and true interpretation, and I ask now who would stand surety for the preservation of a valid tradition in the case of an opera first given here fifty years ago, and never under the conductorship of the composer? Herr Lipinski, in Your Excellency's presence, advanced against me the unimpeachability of the performances of the Royal Orchestra. I think there can be no doubt that this was merely a form of speech on his part by the use of which he hoped the more easily to score off me under Your Excellency's eyes, for I am well acquainted with Herr Lipinski's views on the condition of the Royal Orchestra from his own repeated remarks on the subject. He is, on the contrary, in agreement with me on the point that in certain sections of our orchestra the performance is not always all that it should be. * * *

In fact, although Herr Lipinski made a show of speaking only in the interests of righteousness, I cannot avoid believing that he

really came forward out of injured vanity and personal interest, cleverly as he mingled this with generalisations. On this account I accuse Herr Lipinski of dishonesty. * * * *

87. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, 12*th May*, 1843.

* * * * Are you industrious? Well, I am at last to become so once more. I haven't written a note for a year and a half! Just now I have to prepare a big choral work (it must occupy at least half an hour) for the approaching festival of Men's Choirs in Dresden. I have taken as my subject-matter the *Love-Feast of the Apostles*, with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. I next intend to reduce my *Rienzi* to a single evening's length. The provincial theatres find the division into two evenings a great obstacle. I cherish high hopes (just as one always does!) for a new opera of which I have the libretto complete at present. It has three acts and is based on a mingling of the Tannhäuser saga with that of the song tournament of Wartburg. I shall attack the composition this summer. * * *

88. TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ROYAL AND IMPERIAL COURT OPERA THEATRE, FOR DR. LEO HERZ, VIENNA

DRESDEN, 20*th May*, 1843.

* * Through Herr Mechetti, who writes to me from Leipzig, I have just received an inquiry from the Royal and Imperial Court Opera Theatre of Vienna as to whether I would consider writing a new opera for the approaching German season in Vienna * *, or whether I have not a new opera completed which could shortly be staged there? * * *

I am, indeed, upon the point of beginning to compose a new opera [*Tannhäuser*], the first performance of which I have had to promise to the Dresden Theatre for next winter, and for which the scene painter has already been commissioned. I have nevertheless another subject [1] in reserve, the magnificence, freshness and novelty of which promises, I think, a great success. As this subject can, in the first place, give no offence to the censor of Vienna, and, in the second, contains most advantageous rôles for the best talents of the Viennese Opera, Madame Hasselt and Herrn Staudigl and Erl, I would willingly give an undertaking to compose it for the first performance in Vienna of the season 1844–5. * * *

As I can offer no new opera, nor one not elsewhere performed, for the coming season, I know nothing which could better answer my own wishes and the interests of the Royal and Imperial Court

[1] *The Saracen Woman*—never fully composed.

Opera Theatre than a speedily accomplished production of my opera *Rienzi*. Everyone acquainted with this work and at the same time with the taste of the Viennese public and the resources of the Viennese Opera, must see that it is likely to be highly successful in Vienna.[1] With the object of adapting it for Austria I have sent the libretto with the alterations which seemed to me necessitated by the censorship, to Herr Adalbert Prix, he having suggested that I should do so, and I have sent it with the express wish that he should lay it before the censor. * * * *

89. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, STAYING AT TEPLITZ

DRESDEN, *2nd June*, 1843.

DEAREST AND BEST LITTLE WIFE OF MY HEART!

* * * Lipinski has won my full pardon for the injury done me with a very genuinely meant embrace. * * *

3rd June.

* * * Lindenau has been to see me again, and Frau Rottorf, who doesn't at all like to see me disturbed at my work, regarded the Prime Minister with suspicion and showed him the door. The poor man had to depart leaving a few lines begging me to visit him soon. Frau Rottorf was terrified to death when she found it had been the Prime Minister; and I had to dress and go off to see him myself! He had shown my composition [2] to the King, who at once sat down at the piano, played it through, and expressed great pleasure in it. This business has made me hugely busy, and I have a hundred things to see to to get everything properly organised. * * * *

* * * As soon as this business of the unveiling is over I must make giant strides with my work for the Choral Festival. Directly the composition [3] is finished there will be rehearsals, etc. Added to this there are all the operas, with to-day, for a change,—the *Freischütz*[4]!!! Then for three weeks I shall have to sacrifice my treasured morning hours (I now get up regularly at five at latest) and I see clearly that I shall have to do something for my health's sake. I have consequently decided to take a thorough course of mineral waters with Struwe. It comes very hard on me, for it means observing a strict régime.

Otherwise, thank God, I am very well—my lassitude has left me, and I am fresh and fit. * * * *

[1] *Rienzi* was not produced in Vienna till 1871.

[2] "Weihegruss" for a four-part male choir for the unveiling of a memorial to Frederick Augustus I. on 7 June, 1843; cf. No. 96.

[3] *The Love-Feast of the Apostles*; see No. 96.

[4] *The Free-Shooter*.

* * * All the world is going to Teplitz, but I cannot possibly get there. Twice in church every holy day and then rehearsals! It's shameful! * * * *

90. TO THE SAME

* * * The ceremony went off very well yesterday, and *my* chorus[1] won a decisive victory over Mendelssohn's,[2] which was ineffective and unintelligible. Lindenau, too, said the same to me to-day outright, and assured me the whole Court was of a like opinion. * * * *

I must now make all speed with the *Apostles*! This evening it is to be *Norma* with Mme. Werthmüller—stupid rubbish! * * *

91. TO HIS BROTHER, ALBERT WAGNER, HALLE

DRESDEN, 14*th June*, 1843.

* * * How you poor folk are always immersed in difficulties! You may be sure I wish with all my soul to see you speedily released from that martyrdom. * * My chief concern is and always will be —Johanna. I see more and more clearly that she will soon be very welcome here. In any case I shall hold to the agreement, but it may come even sooner! You see our women singers and our opera are in a really pitiful way, and when Devrient is not here, the most brilliant repertoire runs to waste! And now there is the uncertainty as to whether Devrient, for instance, will be here next winter. * * *

The fear that Johanna would be overtaxed here too early loses force, for she shall sing few but good rôles and, furthermore, singers do not wear themselves out with singing here! * * * *

My wife has been twenty days now at the baths at Teplitz. * * Before she went away we had a great pleasure. On my birthday sixty singers of the local choral society solemnly serenaded me with coloured lanterns, etc., and presented me with a poem about myself which was sung to a melody by Weber. A thing of that kind really does touch one very much!

I have very nearly finished my composition for the Choral Festival, and promise myself it will produce a great effect. You are most warmly invited on July 5th and 6th for the performance. * * *

[1] See No. 89, note 3.

[2] Cf. *My Life*, p. 353.

92. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, STAYING AT TEPLITZ

DRESDEN, 14*th June*, 1843.

* * * As to Spohr—I really have made a most remarkable conquest of him. All who know him describe him as the coldest, gruffest and most unapproachable of men with a great antipathy to strangers. Everyone counts it a real service on my part to have so completely won his favour simply through my work [*The Flying Dutchman*]. This happy success in Cassel gives me a great advantage. * * * *

You have no need at all to worry about my health. I am fit and well and my head is clear. My bowels are behaving themselves again, and I hardly suffer at all from colic now. All the same I should still like to go in for a cure with you. It is a pity that the bad weather so often prevents me from going for my walk. I have a lot to do. When I am not busy with an opera there is always something or other on hand with the *Liedertafel*.[1] I have all but finished my composition and count on its creating a really thrilling impression.

The day before yesterday the King commanded me to the Bastei with some singers and members of the orchestra. Luckily the weather was so bad that the party was countermanded. Tomorrow is Corpus Christi Day, and I shall have to conduct in church in *uniform* because it is the greatest of festivals and everyone is to appear in gala dress. We had never thought of it.

Our operas are still going exceptionally well, and since I for my own part hold very few rehearsals—as with *La Muetta*—the orchestra is simply amazed at my assurance and is, furthermore, grateful for the trouble saved. * * * *

93. TO THE SAME

DRESDEN, 30*th June*, 1843.

* * * I finished the instrumentation, too, yesterday and to-day at least can rest from writing! I rehearsed the choral parts of my new composition [*The Love-Feast of the Apostles*] for the first time last Tuesday. It already goes better than I expected. As soon as it had been sung once through, there was an outburst of enthusiasm from the 200 singers present which they expressed by a long round of applause. We hold rehearsals in a large hall in the Brühlschen Gardens, so several of us went after rehearsal to the restaurant there, for a little refreshment. As I entered I was received with the "Peace" chorus out of *Rienzi* played by the orchestra. When it was over all the people present applauded quite alarmingly. I then discovered that it had just been given for the third time by request.

[1] Choral Society. (TRANS.)

Then came the overture from *Rienzi* again, which is becoming positively hackneyed, followed by another outburst of applause. Hartung told me afterwards that he had learned the overture to his cost; it is asked for so often that his orchestra are almost done to death playing it; it had just been called for the third time. * * * *

94. TO THE SAME

DRESDEN, *1st July*, 1843.

* * * * Before then [the Choral Festival], I should like to finish another piece of work which I do not want to have on my hands any longer, that is the adaptation of *Rienzi* for a single evening. I have begun on it already and hope to complete it in a few days. In case, as I hope, I get my leave, I should like to have all that behind me and to devote all my attention to my *new* opera [*Tannhäuser*]. * * *

95. TO THE SAME

DRESDEN, *12th July, afternoon*, 1843.

Minel! Minel! I have *got my leave*! I really must say I have once again been very pleased with Lüttichau, particularly too with his whole manner of behaving to me. * * *

Well, my pet, I am coming! But I cannot come before Monday or Tuesday next week! Firstly I have to conduct yesterday's opera once more, secondly I have an invitation from Lüttichau for Sunday, and lastly I shall not have finished scribbling *Rienzi* till then.* * * *

96. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, *13th July*, 1843.

* * * * I have been so overwhelmed with work and affairs during the past two months that I am sure my leave is now a necessity for reasons of health and for relaxation from mental and physical exertion. In the middle of May, Reissiger went on leave and I had to shoulder practically alone all the duties of both church and theatre. Added to this, I received the royal command to compose a choral work [1] for the unveiling of the memorial to King Frederick Augustus. * * * I had scarcely finished it when I had to set to work on a small oratorio which I had promised for the great Festival of Men's Choirs in Dresden. Busy as I was with ordinary duties, I had 14 days to complete a long and serious piece of composition the text of which I had to devise myself. My nerves became

[1] See No. 89, note 2, p. 98.

so overstrung during this period that I often sat and cried for a quarter of an hour at a time. This composition, first put off and finally finished almost too late, had then to be rehearsed (my muscles have not yet quite recovered from the effects of the strain), and I also had all kinds of other rehearsals to conduct as Director of the local Choral Society. But the result richly repaid me. The Festival was magnificent in the truest sense of the word, especially the performance in the Church of Our Lady. Imagine the effect of a choir of 1200 men's voices, all fully trained, on a platform occupying almost the whole nave of the church, supported by an orchestra of 100 instruments! There has never been anything like it in any church anywhere. This day I again bore away the prize. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon my *Love-Feast of the Apostles* and we were all transported. Afterwards wherever I turned among the mass of singers gathered from all parts of Saxony I was met with "vivas" and "hurras" and the uproar seemed as if it would never cease. * * * *

To tell truth, my negligence in not writing to you must be laid to the door of an extraordinary feeling of despondency which descended on me like lead with the news of our dear Lehrs' death. For a whole week after the receipt of this news my brain and my whole being felt apathetic, stunned. It weighed upon me like a curse, so that I could scarcely lift my head. When I reflect that I looked on, and was obliged to look on, while this poor brave friend of mine was slowly destroyed before my eyes by the Fate that dogs every noble and modest soul! Oh, my dears, I seemed to see that Paris of yours as a monstrous den of assassins, where we with our innocent ambition are quietly and unnoticeably done to death! * * * *

97. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

TEPLITZ, *27th July*, 1843.

* * Your favour of the 25th inst. gives me to understand that while you think my opera *The Flying Dutchman* worth the considerable cost of publication (a fact of which I am myself well assured), you do not think it worth the honorarium which you customarily pay for operas. This surprises me greatly, for I cannot understand how one could be willing to expend considerable capital upon an article which one doubted to be worth its purchase money; yet it goes to confirm a long and sadly cherished conviction of mine that an original *German* opera, launched under auspices however favourable, is not such sound business for a *German* publisher

as any French work, even one with so ambiguous a history as Halévy's *Charles VI.* Now that I see my worst fears confirmed by the proprietors of the most respected and richest firm of music dealers in Germany, I take it as an indication that I shall do better for the present not to offer my opera elsewhere but to hold it back, and herewith take the liberty of informing you that I shall take no further steps to get my work published till its increasing success at the theatres has raised your estimate of its publication value. Be that as it may, I am determined not to place this opera in the hands of any publisher except for a substantial honorarium, since I greatly dislike the idea of condemning a publisher to the grave expense of publication without the assurance that he for his part is convinced that he has obtained a sound bargain, a conviction that he can evince only by paying the author as handsomely as his resources permit. * * *

98. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

1*st August*, 1843, "ZUR EICHE," AT SCHÖNAU NEAR TEPLITZ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

My *Tannhäuser* is reposing, and I feel little impelled to rouse him. It is true I have begun the composition, but not enough to be worth speaking of! I lack two things—quiet and what I can only call ease. I am not at ease, that is to say my mood is inwardly and outwardly discordant. I am *distrait* and long for rest—I don't mean the rest of the sluggard, but, on the contrary, a *concentrated* restlessness. I want to think about a few things, not about all sorts of things. But probably many years will pass before I can get this harmonious rest, for I have to make up for ten years of my past. * * * *

99. TO ROBERT SCHUMANN, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, 21*st September*, 1843.

* * * I have again nothing to write about, save to express my regret that there are a number of things I have not once been able during our long personal intercourse to discuss with you by word of mouth. I particularly wished to ask you something about your new compositions, and among these your *Peri* in particular. I assure you I was delighted with the mere news and title of your composition. I know this marvellous poem [1] and have already passed

[1] "Paradise and the Peri," by Thomas Moore.

it through my musical mind. I could, however, light upon no form in which to reproduce the poem and consequently wish you the luck to have found the right one. You are right. The concert-hall, when it is such as you have in Leipzig, may yet become the sole refuge, the only resort for the cultivation of good music. I almost despair of the theatre, despite my success there! What *can't* win applause on these accursed boards?! Is there any true satisfaction in a success won there? Hardly. The trouble with the theatre is that the audience is made up of people who pay 1 thaler 8 groats, 16 groats, 8 groats and 4 groats! At your concerts they *all* pay 16 groats. That is a great advantage. You have only *one* class to deal with, we with many, of whom the 1 thaler 8 groats class is the worst and the 4 groats class not the best. It is horrible to have to make music for such a mixture and one's only salvation is not to bother about them at all. * * * *

I have not written a note since my *Love-Feast*, but as soon as I am domestically settled here I shall set to upon my *Tannhäuser*. I have a renewed request from Vienna for an opera for 1844–5. I am to send in a summary of my subject [1] and I have been hesitating about it for six weeks. I have a horror of entering into relations with that God-forsaken city! Does it really belong to Germany? I feel as if I were to write an opera for Asia Minor! * * * *

100. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, 22*nd October*, 1843.

* * * * The Berliners have been beating about the bush all this long time and now their Opera House has been burned down [2] —I saw it coming! I won't have my operas given there till the new Opera House is built, although they want to produce the *Dutchman* at the playhouse,[3] which is very small. To finish speaking of myself I will tell you that I haven't been able to work on anything since my sacred composition [4] for the Festival of Men's Choirs at Dresden. It is partly the fault of my bad health, partly of my cramped lodgings which consisted of two rooms only. My health is still not of the best. I suffer very badly from hæmorrhoids, my bowels are in a disastrous state, and the result is a constant feeling of indisposition with pressure of blood in the head. I think of going in for a thorough cure in the spring and hope to get rid of these wearisome bodily

[1] *Tannhäuser*. On 9 December, 1843, Wagner writes to Franz Löbmann: "I was to write an opera for Vienna and have declined. I hate this city of Donizetti."
[2] 18 and 19 August, 1843.
[3] *The Flying Dutchman* was nevertheless produced there.
[4] See No. 96.

afflictions. As to my lodgings, that difficulty is now overcome. We have taken a remarkably pretty and roomy place in the Ostra Allee, and are now completely and beautifully settled in. I have in a sense pledged the takings of my operas (which are naturally steadily increasing) for some years to come for this arrangement, but in the meantime we can live comfortably on my salary and everything I have bought is to *last for our lifetimes*! Oh, what a pleasant thought that is! You can imagine what my poor hardly-tried wife feels about it! And you can easily imagine, too, how happy I am to be able to offer Minna this lasting guerdon! * * * *

My God! When I think, my kind Cecilie, of the times when your greatest joy was to give me help and support! How perfectly, how purely, the truth and goodness of your soul shone out! Only believe that we have never forgotten it, and remembering, earnestly pray Heaven to grant all your wishes, to your true well-being and happiness. I am very glad that your good angel has sent you so kind a nurse for your approaching ordeal! [1] Minna is very grieved that *she* cannot do you this service at that time. Now you must quietly and happily await the hour which will bring you new joy and may this letter do a little to cheer you and to give you strength and courage! Keep before your eyes the beauty of the blessing which Heaven has once more bestowed on you and leave what is painful to the tender Providence which overrules all! Do not fear for your health. You are young and will get stronger still as time goes on. Poor Rosalie [2] suffered for you all. It will go well with you because the joys of motherhood were withheld from *her*.

101. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, *29th October*, 1843.

You would greatly oblige me if you would answer briefly, but at your earliest convenience, my letter, sent fully a week ago, in which I inquired whether you would consider publishing the score of my *Love-Feast of the Apostles*, and asked you to let me know when it was time for me to decide about the title. In case, as I hope, you decide to publish in full,[3] I have * * a slight alteration to make in the part for the harp, and you will, therefore, forgive my repeated request that you will give me the opportunity of making this alteration betimes. * * *

[1] Cecilie Avenarius was expecting her second child.
[2] Rosalie died at the birth of her first child.
[3] They did so, but not till the end of 1844.

102. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

BERLIN, *8th January*, 1844, *7 o'clock in the morning.*

* * * Heavens, what one goes through on an evening like yesterday's, and how many things ran through my mind! It was a most fateful evening for me! Picture it!—With this fantastic opera of mine, so different from anything heard till now, offering, on the face of it, so little that is alluring or popular, I appear before a public *absolutely strange* to me! I felt it very keenly. There was not a single personal friend in the audience, not a soul prepossessed in my favour. There they all sat, in a spirit of common cold curiosity thinking, "H'm! what kind of a thing can this *Flying Dutchman* be?" After the overture not a hand stirs—they hear the melancholy first act out with a tense curiosity and amazement, but without knowing what attitude to take up. A singer here and there gets a little applause. Well, I realise just how critical my position is, but I do not despair as I see that the performance is going extraordinarily well. The second act begins and gradually I realise that I have attained my goal. I have netted my audience and, by means of the first act, got them into that curious mood when I can make them follow me hither and thither at will. The interest grows, tension changes to excitement, exaltation, enthusiasm, and before the curtain falls for the second time I enjoy a triumph such as can have fallen to the lot of few. Never yet, not even when *Rienzi* was produced in Dresden, have I seen and heard such a prolonged outburst of enthusiasm as followed the fall of the curtain here. You could see and hear that in all that crowd of people, high and low, prince, lord and beggar, there was not one who did not shout himself into a frenzy. When I at last appeared with the singers I thought the house would come down!

The last act was child's-play. The scenery was most effective, the thing played itself out with a rush and the close, which was very well presented, came with surprising rapidity. Long before the fall of the curtain the uproar broke out anew and seemed to rage on for an eternity before I could disentangle myself from the orchestra and come forward with the singers who were waiting for me again. In short, my dear wife, I have won a remarkable triumph. But this amazing and quite unprecedented victory of mine can only be fully appreciated by those who know all the circumstances, the present state of opera and the absolute novelty and strangeness of my *Dutchman*. The performance was overpoweringly lovely. They all sang and played like gods. I felt I could gobble them all up! * * *

To-day I am dining with Meyerbeer, to-morrow with Küstner.

I have not seen Meyerbeer since the performance. The King was present and someone who watched him all the time tells me that he was uncommonly pleased with it. I have dined once with Mendelssohn who delighted me by coming on the stage after the performance, embracing me and congratulating me very warmly. * * * *

103. TO FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY, BERLIN

BERLIN, 10*th January*, 1844.

MY DEAR, DEAR MENDELSSOHN!

I am really glad that you have a kindness for me. To have drawn a little nearer to you is to me the happiest incident of my whole Berlin expedition.[1] * * *

104. TO KARL GAILLARD, BERLIN

DRESDEN, 30*th January*, 1844.

It is chiefly people who only know *The Flying Dutchman* who doubt if I should write the libretti for my own operas. They argue that I am unequal to the task because of the difficulties I certainly created for myself in this subject. Those who know *Rienzi*, however, judge otherwise and assert that I could have found no more fortunate libretto than this self-made one. I really lay no claim to a poet's reputation and assure you I at first took to writing for myself of necessity, since no good libretti were offered me. I could not now, however, compose on another's operatic text[2] for the following reasons. It is not my way to choose some story or other at pleasure, get it versified and then begin to consider how to make suitable music for it. For this mode of procedure I should need to be twice inspired, which is impossible. The way I set to work is quite different. In the first place I am only attracted to matter the poetic and musical significance of which strike me simultaneously. Before I go on to write a verse or plot or scene I am already intoxicated by the musical aroma of my subject. I have every note, every characteristic motif in my head, so that when the versification is complete and the scenes arranged the opera is practically finished for me; the detailed musical treatment is just a peaceful meditative after-labour, the real moment of creation having long preceded it. Furthermore, subject matter ought to be selected which is capable of musical treatment only. I would never take a subject which might be used just as well by an able playwright for spoken drama.

[1] In striking contrast to this is the passage in *My Life*, p. 319.
[2] Cf. a letter to Dr. Gustav Klemm, 26 June, 1845.

As a musician I can choose subjects, develop situations and contrasts which must for ever remain outside the province of the poet as playwright. Here and now we arrive at the point where opera and drama should definitely part company, each amicably pursuing its own distinct path. It is the province of the present-day dramatist to give expression and spiritual meaning to the material interests of our own times, but to the operatic poet and composer falls the task of conjuring up the holy spirit of poetry as it comes down to us in the sagas and legends of past ages. For music affords a medium of synthesis which the poet alone, particularly in association with the stage, has not at command. Here is the way to raise opera to a higher level from the debasement into which it has fallen as the result of our expecting composers to take as their subjects commonplaces, intrigues, etc., things which modern comedy and drama without music are far more successful in presenting.

For my next opera I have chosen the beautiful and characteristic saga of the knight Tannhäuser, who lingered in the Venusberg and went to Rome to seek absolution! I have amalgamated this saga with the story of the tournament of song at the Wartburg, where Tannhäuser takes the place of Heinrich von Ofterdingen. By this combination I get a rich subject of drama. I think it will be quite clear that only a musician could handle this subject. * * *

105. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, EDWARD AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, 15*th February*, 1844.

* * * I am now publishing my operas, terms and prospects being alike advantageous. My publisher, Meser of Dresden, advises me to safeguard my copyright in France and England in view of future contingencies, although for the moment there seems no probability of these arising. The only way of doing this as regards France would be as follows. Someone would have to be found in Paris to whom I could send a few copies of a pianoforte arrangement before its actual publication here, with the understanding that he should display it there,[1] under his own copyright, on a given date, corresponding with that of its publication here. It would not matter if the text were German, so long as a French title had been affixed. * * * Naturally this dummy copyright-holder would have to be a trustworthy person willing to forward my interests—one who would not some time or other make use of the copyright without compounding with me for it. See if that would be all right and if you could perhaps yourself assume this provisory copyright. My publisher is

[1] This was not done; see No. 108.

already making similar arrangements for London. Anders can best give you information about the little ways of the music publisher. * * *

106. TO BARON VON LÜTTICHAU, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, 11*th March*, 1844.

* * * * I am starting on my forthcoming journey to Hamburg [1] with a very heavy heart because there are several most weighty decisions to be arrived at in my absence. Such I believe to be the approaching verdict as to the appointment of Röckel as provisory director of music [2]; it will decide once for all whether an artist of no mean talent and learning is to be given the chance to ripen and develop, or whether he is to suffer his life long from a severe, almost annihilating repulse. On the other hand I recognise that my own interests are no little involved in this matter. Last Sunday evening Your Excellency told me in so many words that I no longer possessed the confidence of the Court (and therefore necessarily of Your Excellency) so completely as could be wished; that this lack of confidence referred particularly to my capacities as conductor; and that Your Excellency consequently thought necessary to appoint as conductor of the orchestra another man who, Your Excellency may rest assured, would soon possess himself of what remains of Your Excellency's trust in me. Your Excellency repeatedly assured me that had I possessed the confidence of the Court as fully as could be desired you would have felt no inclination to seek a more talented conductor than Röckel. Here, it appears to me, arises just the situation which I had in mind as a possibility at the time of my appointment, and for which I provided at the time in writing, in the conviction that, if it arose, I could not reconcile it with my sense of honour to enjoy the advantages of a position when the confidence which should attach to it was lacking.

If the accusation brought against me as a conductor consists solely in occasional objections to my treatment of tempi in the operas of the later Italian *maestri*, then a German musician of otherwise proved capacity cannot take the attack more seriously than would Weber or Mendelssohn were they faced with the same problems, and this for reasons which I would prefer not to discuss with that portion of the musical public to which these operas make a great appeal. A man can serve but one God,—the Truth that he recognises and honours as such! If, however, the accusation extends farther and covers those performances (few, unfortunately) which

[1] For the performance of *Rienzi*. [2] This ensued.

have offered myself and the orchestra problems such as those with which Mendelssohn, for instance, pre-occupies himself exclusively, and which alone call for the exertion of an artiste's real powers, then I must regard it very seriously indeed. I can only believe that this is the case, since Your Excellency has felt obliged to tell me that my credit in high quarters is not such as to convince Your Excellency that it is unnecessary to appoint another particularly talented orchestral conductor.

If Your Excellency should feel moved to confirm this reading of the situation, I should still feel it a duty to draw your attention to the fact that the appointment of an honest yet somewhat commonplace musician such as Herr Bach [1] would not meet the case nor the needs of the academy. Your Excellency should rather make it your aim to find some more renowned and considerable conductor, since upon my retirement, *which would necessarily ensue*, you would be in possession of the means to allot a better salary to the post you wish to fill than you can do now and for which Your Excellency would never regret the opportunity of having permanently secured the services of a really good artist. I, for my part, would thereupon present my most humble petition to His Majesty that His Most Gracious Majesty would be pleased to divest me of my functions, allowing me notwithstanding to rehearse and conduct my opera, and perhaps, in certain special cases and at His Majesty's pleasure, to conduct this or that performance as it is judged within the capacity of my limited talent, for which service I should naturally be allotted a lesser salary at His Majesty's pleasure.

My retirement, upon the above-mentioned terms, from the active directorship of the orchestra is moreover a matter of conscience with me on other grounds, the considerations put before me yesterday by Your Excellency being among them. The orchestra needs a leader possessing the complete and unreserved confidence of His Majesty and of Your Excellency, it being high time that such an one, being expressly assured of that confidence, should be entrusted with the task of making a full report upon the condition of that institution and upon the absolute necessity of certain remedies (answering to the present age and its demands) for the abuses which have sprung up within it. It is plain that a task of this kind, if it is to be successful, can only be entrusted to a man who, as I have said, is assured of the unconditional confidence of his superiors, a man, too, whose capacity for the task and whose judgment in claiming only what is necessary without exaggeration, may be absolutely relied upon. My recent discoveries compel me

[1] This appointment was not made.

to confess my vanity in having flattered myself that I was not far from the point at which I might ask to be entrusted with the great honour of this task. In spite of the few opportunities afforded for really artistic achievement in the service of the Court Theatre, I made unremitting efforts to awaken and encourage the artistic sense of the orchestra which threatened to be extinguished beneath the burden of commonplace daily duties, so that we were often ourselves surprised by the success of our own efforts. By continuous endeavour I have been able to compose the differences originally existing between myself and the orchestra and I may now flatter myself that its members look with the utmost confidence to me as the man who can assist them in their difficulties. Nevertheless I am now forced to perceive that I lack what is to me the most important factor, the confidence of the Court. * * * *

107. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

HAMBURG, *22nd March*, 1844.

Well, Minel, *Rienzi* was given yesterday and triumphed once more. It is really no small achievement to have produced the opera without a proper Rienzi and yet to have created a *furore*. * * *

* * * I still cannot understand how a success of this kind can have come about *without* Tichatschek. I can boast that the triumph was due to my opera alone, for Wurda was not a patch upon Tichatschek, although he sang certain things quite well. But the fellow is appallingly wooden! Time and again I thought to myself, "Heavens above, if I only had my Tichatschek here!" The greater Wurda's insufficiency, however, the greater my honour and I confess I am rather proud of it. The rest sang well for the most part, with the exception of the Messenger of Peace, who was very sleepy. The choruses went exceptionally well, the most enthusiastic people being the musicians and singers themselves—a good sign for the long run. * * * I should like nothing better than to see the jubilations there would be here if Tichatschek were doing Rienzi!

* * * Cornet counts on some twenty performances of *Rienzi* this year. The author's royalties will be a tit-bit, won't they? * * *

108. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, PARIS

DRESDEN, *28th July*, 1844.

* * * * It is nothing but work with me at present, and work of the most vexatious kind! For the last five months I have had entirely to lay aside the composition of my new opera [*Tannhäuser*], which

I had only just begun, I have been so busy over the constantly postponed publication of my two earlier operas. It has meant an ocean of labour and in spite of great industry the full pianoforte version of *Rienzi* (which is frightfully difficult—as bad as three other operas put together) will not appear till the middle of August, and the *Dutchman* not till some weeks later. I therefore intend to take my leave in the latter half of August and go into the country, to Pillnitz perhaps. I can then finish my new opera there. * * *

Please tell Edward that I have given up the idea of securing the copyrights of my operas in French, as the thing is too complicated. And now Edward is leaving Paris. To whom could I entrust my affairs there? I have a publisher in London, the most important of them too, Beale, who is himself much inclined to have my opera produced at an English theatre. * * * *

Things go very well with Albert! He does not know I am writing to-day. Johanna is getting on splendidly. The day before yesterday she sang Irene in *Rienzi* and surpassed all her predecessors in the part. Lord! What must *their* feelings be now!

109. TO MAX VON WEBER, LONDON

DRESDEN, *3rd September*, 1844.

MY GOOD FRIEND!

The translation of your dear Father's [1] precious ashes is to be carried out now during your absence in London. We here claim as a great honour the privilege of bearing the comparatively small expenses. * * * *

110. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, *12th December*, 1844.

* * A hearty welcome to Germany! Dearest love to you and your husband and children from Minna and myself! It was with a strange, new, keenly aroused and most warm emotion that we once more received news of you so close at hand. *Still* to have to go on writing seems intolerable, and yet it is quite impossible at present to leave here even for a day, since in face of the imminent arrival here of Weber's ashes, and following that, a new opera by Marschner [*Adolf von Nassau*] which I am to produce at the New Year, I cannot dream of being away from Dresden for a moment.

Once more—be tremendously welcome! We Dresden relatives hail your coming with a great acclamation! Be convinced that we all mean it! * * *

[1] See Nos. 110 and 113.

111. TO THE SAME

DRESDEN, *9th January*, 1845.

* * Minna wanted to write to you this time, but I see she will not get it done to-day, so I will once again be her proxy. The business she makes of it every time she has a couple of lines to write is simply incredible, and yet you must have a speedy answer to your dear letter of the day before yesterday. Forgive her then and don't do her the injustice of attributing to lack of feeling what is simply dread of letter-writing. She is unchangeably your truest and warmest friend! Now, then, to the point!

* * * With all my heart come with *both* children, and bring the *bonne* too, in Heaven's name—if you think it necessary, though I may tell you that Natalie is here visiting us for the first time and she could quite well take the place of a nurse to your two little ones. * * * *

112. TO LOUIS SPOHR, CASSEL

DRESDEN, *4th February*, 1845.

MOST REVERED MASTER! * * *

Directly I heard of the appearance of a new dramatic work [*The Crusades*] of yours I proposed to ask you what date would best suit you for the performance of the same in Dresden, yourself being present, in order to be able to discuss immediately with our director-in-chief the terms and details of an invitation to you to this effect. Now, however, you have yourself approached Herr Lüttichau and we, to our shame, can do nothing but thankfully accept your offer. * * * *

There could be no more important event for present-day German opera than the reappearance in it of such a Master as yourself. God knows I am of the sorrowful opinion that our younger operatic composers are quite unequal to the task of revivifying German opera and recent works have forced me regretfully to the conclusion that these people of whom I speak have no idea in their heads save to *please at all costs*. They doubt, they despair of a specifically German spirit and think they must set about being cosmopolitan. They think they can blend Auber-ish spiciness with Donizetti-ish tunefulness, in a flux compounded of Teuton profundity, and so make sure of producing something universally acceptable. Practically all modern German opera seems to me to suffer from this objectionable quest for superficial success. These people have no sure faith in the invincibility of the good and true, and how can there be inspiration without such a faith?—and how can a work of art be created without inspiration? And it is striking how these

people always see themselves beaten! Their works, which owe their very being simply to the desire to please everyone, in the end please no one. They are not piquant enough for Auber, not emphatic enough for Donizetti and much too trivial for the rest of us. Here in Dresden we have found all these qualities in the most recent work [1] of a famous German composer.

Ah well, Heaven be praised which put it into your mind to give us something new. We hail it with joy and firm confidence. * * * *

With the deepest admiration and submission * *.

113. TO KARL GAILLARD, BERLIN

DRESDEN, *5th June*, 1845.

* * * After one single stroke of good fortune which speedily brought me fame and a position of great importance for the present needs of Germany, my good angel seems suddenly to have folded his wings. After my first appearance in Dresden I have not again been able to make any decisive advance. I need a great city, the greatest city in Germany, to give force to my Dresden success. But Berlin seems to exist simply to break my power. On the face of it, it was too daring to appear before a great public, and one which could know nothing of me beforehand, with a work like my *Flying Dutchman* and my first appearance in Berlin ought most decidedly to have been with *Rienzi*. But now that the *Dutchman* has been accorded a tolerably effective début (in the ordinary playhouse, too, which is an unfavourable place for my music), the Berlin Intendant [von Küstner] must needs spoil such impression as I had succeeded in making, by entirely omitting the opera from the repertoire in obedience to sheer hidebound routine. So the chances of this opera of mine are simply wrecked from the start and its further dissemination is not to be thought of for the present. And how hard I am working now to smooth the way for *Rienzi* in Berlin! Last summer Meyerbeer was present at the twentieth performance of this opera, and had a further opportunity of convincing himself of its success, in that the author was called before the curtain enthusiastically after each of the five acts (yes, and twice after the fourth), and he then promised me, heart and soul, to set about getting this opera performed to a Berlin audience at the first possible moment. I still do not doubt the honesty of his intentions towards me. But the still unsurmounted obstacle in the way of the production of my opera—the lack of a leading tenor—is enough to make me despair altogether. Furthermore, this difficulty of getting my works accepted

[1] Marschner's *Adolf von Nassau*.

elsewhere is doubled by the present condition of criticism in Dresden. Dresden is a place which a century of dead routine has reduced to complete critical insignificance. Weber found Italian opera flourishing here, an admired exotic growth. He had to create a German opera out of nothing and this under the most hampering conditions in the world, for the Court was totally unsympathetic. * * * Encouraged by the rich material to hand here, I have now set myself the glorious task of carrying on Weber's work, that is to say, of helping to emancipate Dresden musically, of smiting the Philistines hip and thigh, of ennobling the public taste here and of thereby making its voice one to be considered. What is the first obstacle I meet? Jealousy!! * * * I have happily overcome the evil machinations of this jealousy as far as it opposed my practical efficacy, but just where I cannot honourably join issue in the field of criticism, it is waxing luxuriantly. But what *is* criticism in such a town as Dresden? We have only one journal and only one correspondent for foreign papers. Your old acquaintance Schladebach may have his uses, but as far as I am concerned he is the blind slave of the workings of a murderous jealousy, with the result that outside Saxony my activities are either grossly misrepresented in the press or—what is almost worse—my successes go entirely unremarked. For instance, when I came here I lighted on Marschner's *Hans Heiling*, the score of which had been accepted for production ten years back and still reposed peacefully on the library shelf. I got it out and produced it. Again, I heard that Marschner had finished a new opera, *Adolf von Nassau*. I insisted upon getting this work performed for the first time here, no little to the surprise of the composer who would sooner have expected the Dresden Theatre to fall to the ground than to come to such a decision. Again, a big festival of Men's Choirs was to be held. My predecessors had been far above taking part in anything of the kind, but I took the lead and brought off a really magnificent performance at the Church of Our Lady here. Again, the orchestra itself was rotten with numberless abuses, but after tremendous battles I got the necessary reinforcements, a better personnel, an increased number of strings, etc. In spite of the strong disapproval of the Court and Intendant I put through the removal of Weber's ashes to Dresden; and the reburial, with accompanying solemnities worthy of the occasion, was my work too. * * * Did you read anything about all this in the columns of "News from Dresden"? Have you ever seen the fact mentioned that, since its first performance here, my *Rienzi* has been the sole opera here to draw a full house always, even under unfavourable external conditions?—or that the King of Prussia

attended the twenty-fifth performance, displaying marked and well-attested interest? No, of course you have not, and yet things of this kind do not as a rule pass without comment. * * * I know quite well that a newspaper report cannot make a bad work of a good one or a good one of a bad, but the papers can act as a hindrance and a drag—and they can dishearten a man. * * * I still believe it of the greatest importance to the whole future of our dramatic music for great work to arise in the heart of Germany and be disseminated through the land, and yet I tell you it is with pain I confess to having sometimes looked involuntarily towards Paris again, when here such a slough clogs my every step. Can it really be, after all, that Germany is only to be worked upon through Paris? When I set my mind on Paris I feel miserable and restless, as if I were planning to betray my own dear mother. It's a fine thing, is it not, for a man to be driven to such traitorous thoughts? Help me to blot them out forever! I am sending you herewith my *Tannhäuser* as he loves and lives—a German from head to toe. Kindly accept him as a present. May he be able to win me the hearts of my German fellow-countrymen in far greater numbers than, up to now, my earlier works have succeeded in doing!! Either this is good work, or I shall never do good work. It put a real spell upon me. However and wherever I touched my subject the flame leaped and glowed in me. In spite of long interruptions to my work, when I returned to it I always found myself back in the twinkling of an eye in the characteristic atmosphere which enchanted me upon my first conception of it.

* * * * At the end of this month I go to Marienbad and in August return to Dresden to rehearse *Tannhäuser*. Pianoforte arrangements, etc., are all ready prepared, so I shall be quite free and unencumbered from the day after the first performance. I had it in mind to idle away a year afterwards, that is to say, to go through my library from end to end without creating anything, but unfortunately I already feel a strong urge to do so, as a new subject [*Lohengrin*] has captured me completely. However, I mean to restrain myself forcibly, firstly because there are still things I would like to learn, and secondly because I am convinced that if a dramatic work is to have intense significance and originality it must come as the result of a definite upward step, a real cultural advance in the life of its composer. Such a step, such a new period is not to be marked off every half-year! it takes several years to produce this stored ripeness. Only money-grubbers can be content to produce even one inferior piece of work—but I shall never make any money, to that I am now resigned. * * * *

114. TO OTTO KARL CLAUDIUS, NAUMBURG-AN-DER-SAALE [1]

MOST HONOURED FRIEND! DRESDEN, *29th June*, 1845.

I begin by asking you to rest assured that I am deliberating over the composition of your opera [*Der Gang nach dem Eisenhammer*] purely out of my great interest in the many beautiful and excellent things it contains. I think your music good almost throughout. There are certain portions, such as the introduction to the first act, the whole Eisenhammer scene and so on, which I value more highly than many an entire modern opera or oratorio, for they bear the noblest stamp of Romanticism. With so much which truly enchants me, I am naturally inclined to feel that a work like this should not be withheld from the world and it is only when I fix my mind on the desirability of the actual production of the opera that I begin to wish some things other than they are. Let me be brief. I will first speak of what resides in the subject itself and is rooted in the dramatic construction of the libretto. * * * We will consider simply how the opera can be altered from its present form so as to make it a more concentrated, that is to say a more effective, music drama, without going very destructively to work. In all these proposals * * the end I have in view is the possibility of helping your opera to a success upon the boards. First of all, your libretto contains too many characters and too many scenes. I wish you had never known Holbein's [2] incoherent, higgledy-piggledy, insipid version and had had nothing before you but Schiller's ballad and you would have come far nearer to constructing a sound opera. * * * Listen now, while I tell you my proposal for a complete scenic rearrangement in your libretto, a proposal which I make to you upon mature consideration. * * * *

* * * It is asking a lot of you to undertake such a great alteration in your work. * * * If you take my advice and undergo this difficult and painful operation I shall be very glad to think I have been able to influence you to it, for I am certain that by this means we shall all be the better of a good and successful piece of operatic work.[3] * * *

115. TO HIS BROTHER, ALBERT WAGNER, DRESDEN

MARIENBAD, *4th August*, 1845.

* * * We shall have finished our cure in another four days * * and shall then have spent a full five weeks upon it! There are signs

[1] This letter was first published in full in *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1916, p. 229.

[2] Franz von Holbein's (Wagner erroneously writes "Hohlbein") *Fridolin, oder der Gang nach dem Eisenhammer* is in vol i. of his *Theatre* (Rudolstadt, 1811).

[3] Wagner's advice was followed by Claudius, but the opera was first performed (in Naumburg and Halle) in 1884, seven years after the latter's death.

that it has been a success for me and for Minna. We kept away from acquaintances as far as possible in the customary way and confined ourselves to wanderings in the woods and hills. But my brain refuses to lose its restlessness and so yesterday I finished a complete and detailed plan for *Lohengrin*, with which I am exceedingly pleased and—yes, I admit it—which fills me with proud satisfaction. You know how sometimes I used to be troubled that I should never be able to find another subject to touch *Tannhäuser* for warmth and originality. But the better I get to know this new subject of mine, the more inwardly I grasp it, the more richly and luxuriantly it breaks forth into a wealth of bloom which it truly delights me to call mine. The discovery and shaping of this work has, moreover, this great interest attaching: the old-German poem [1] in which this most poetic of sagas has been preserved is the poorest and flattest of the kind that has come down to us, and I am glad to have been able to free this almost unrecognisable saga from the dust and rubbish of the old poet's prosaic treatment and to have brought to light its great poetic values through my own inventive and plastic powers. But, apart from that—what a fortunate operatic text it is! Effective, alluring, impressive, moving in every part! Johanna's rôle in it (which is very important and is really the chief part) is to be the most charming and affecting in the world.[2] * * *

* * * I hope to God that the desire, or rather the irresistible impulse, to begin a new opera will not come upon me this winter so that I can take a really clear-headed and active interest in our Royal Saxon Opera! I have many very thoroughgoing schemes in mind.[3] * * * *

116. TO KARL GAILLARD, BERLIN

DRESDEN, *3rd November*, 1845.

MY DEAR GOOD FRIEND!

I have won my case triumphantly with *Tannhäuser*! * * * The second performance was delayed till eight days after the first on account of the hoarseness of several of the singers and that was a bad business, because in the interval, misunderstanding, mistaken and stupid opinions, well-nourished by my active foes, had plenty of room to spread, and when the second performance at last came on my opera was really on the point of failure. The house was not very full—opposition! prejudice! Happily the singers had not lost their enthusiasm, understanding dawned, and the somewhat

[1] *Lohengrin. An Old-German Poem*, edited with an introduction by Guido Görres (Heidelberg, 1813).

[2] See No. 124. [3] See No. 120.

shortened third act, in particular, got well across. After the singers had been called, there was a clamorous demand for me. By now I had a nucleus in the public. The third performance was to a well-filled house, and was enthusiastically received. * * * Yesterday at last, the fourth performance was played to a house full to bursting. After each act, first the singers and then the author were called, and after the second act there was a regular tumult! Wherever I looked people acclaimed me wildly. * * *

* * * Whenever I think of you I feel thoroughly unhappy because I so greatly regret having made you come to that first performance, that unsatisfactory first [1] performance—for Tichatschek has been far better, and often excellent, at subsequent performances. How shabbily I entertained you, and how dully and churlishly I met the great sacrifice you made! I am simply crushed to earth when I think of it! I was just like one stunned, those days. * * *

117. TO PROFESSOR DR. LÖWE, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, *6th November*, 1845.

* * * * There is about to be a new election to the directorship of the "Liedertafel." [2] I think I may take it as certain that the choice will again fall on me for a variety of friendly considerations, in spite of recent complaints about my discharge of a choir conductor's functions. * * * I hold it my duty, therefore, less for personal reasons than in the interests of the society itself, to say beforehand that I am unable upon any consideration to fill the post of choir conductor any longer. May I be permitted quite openly to state my reasons? They are concerned solely with the well-being of the "Liedertafel," which would most certainly be imperilled by my retaining my position longer. A society like the "Liedertafel" needs a conductor with time and inclination to give far more care and thought to his work than I have been, or can be, able to do. * * * Herr Conductor Hiller is at present settled in Dresden and—what is most to our present purpose—is without an official appointment. I am convinced that no event could have occurred more fortunate for the "Liedertafel." What the "Liedertafel" hoped for from me it would certainly obtain, and obtain more fully, from Herr Hiller —a man of capacity and artistic renown. His chief recommendation as compared with myself, however, is that he has no official business to attend to and could devote himself more exclusively than I could do to the conductorship of the "Liedertafel." [3] * * * *

[1] Cf. *My Life*, pp. 370–7.

[2] Round Table of Song—a choral society.

[3] Hiller was chosen.

118. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

BERLIN, *Friday morning* [*12th December*], 1845.

* * * * For the moment my business is finished here and I am only staying to-day to hear *Norma* with Mme. Lind and at last redeem my promise to meet Mme. Frommann and Professor Werder. * * *

As I don't want to leave you in the dark, my little pet, about the results of my efforts until my arrival, I will tell you briefly what I have done, as follows: (1) Küstner wants to produce *Rienzi* in September of next year. (2) Count Redern wants the King to commission me to compose my next new opera [*Lohengrin*] for Berlin. I have quite satisfied myself that it is impossible to get one of my operas produced here before Easter.

Last Wednesday I dined in brilliant company with Redern * * who wanted to arrange for me to read the libretto of my new opera to the King myself. That would have meant staying here *all next week*, however, for yesterday the King went hunting with Redern, etc., and will not be back before Monday.

Mme. Meyerbeer, whose great cordiality and interest have overwhelmed me, thinks very highly of Redern's plan that I should receive the Royal commission for my next opera for Berlin. Her husband returns at Christmas and everything is to be settled then. If *Rienzi* can still be produced in the meantime, so much the better. * * * *

119. TO ALWINE FROMMANN, BERLIN

DRESDEN, *27th December*, 1845.

MY GOOD FRIEND! * * *

For the present I have quite given up the idea of *Lohengrin* for Berlin—though that was the sole trophy I bore away from my last Berlin campaign! The better I get on with the opera, the quicker it will be finished, and the more perfectly I want to see it performed. But I can't see it perfectly performed with Tuczek, Marx, Mantius, and the rest! Well then—away with honour and glory! I am again writing *Lohengrin* for Dresden! My Intendant implored me to do so and besides he has so flattered me lately with reports of the praises of the King of all the Saxons, that I simply can't withstand him. I am writing the same now to Meyerbeer. If he wants to do something for me he can get my ranter of a *Rienzi* performed. It really would be much more possible than *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*—and it would at least bring me in money of which I have much need. * * *

120. TO BARON VON LÜTTICHAU, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, *2nd March*, 1846.

* * * Being strongly aware of the necessity of the task * * I have again * * undertaken to set forth the experiences and opinions of my three years of office in the form of a clear and evidential statement. I have devoted the past three months to the task of submitting those matters which it seemed necessary to me to bring forward to a strict and most exact examination. I have weighed every point, and on that account have revised and recast certain items twice, thrice or even four times. I have now at length reached the end of my work herein enclosed [*Of the Royal Orchestra*], touching which I beg Your Excellency to rest assured that I have been moved to undertake it by no outside instigation whatever; that it is, as it lies before you, entirely my secret; and that none of the points therein contained is the result of discussion or agreement with any of the individuals concerned. I felt it a duty imposed upon me by my conscience in accordance with my oath of allegiance to His Majesty the King.

What may be the fate of my work, whether it will earn a complete or only a partial[1] success, I cannot exactly foresee, but in any case I cherish the hope that it will, despite its length, be thought worthy of careful consideration, since it treats of the particular interests of an institution which is handsomely endowed from His Majesty's Civil List and hence must necessarily be expected to constitute a sound and perfect whole. * * * *

121. TO THE SAME

DRESDEN, *4th March*, 1846.

Your Excellency will permit me to advance a most humble petition:

The matter touches the platform of the old Opera House which is so constructed as to contravene all rules for the arrangement of an oratorio or symphony orchestra and probably has no counterpart anywhere else in the world. Its deficiencies scarcely need enumeration, for it must leap to the eye of any observer that an orchestra only two rows deep, arranged in a semicircle fifty-six feet in diameter, can only keep exact time with the greatest difficulty and by the exercise of constant anxious care, while it is utterly impossible for it to produce the beautiful and forceful results otherwise to be expected from so well-equipped a body. * * *

[1] It had no result (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. xii., pp. 45–102).

I hold that a request for help of this kind ought to be accompanied by a plan elaborated sufficiently for the scope of the proposal to be easily apparent, and so, with the kind assistance of Herr Hänel, mechanical engineer, I have drawn up my scheme for the accommodation of the oratorio and symphony orchestra in a manner adapted to the conditions of the old Opera House and enclose it herewith for Your Excellency's kind consideration. * * * Lipinski, too, is quite at one with me in this, and I do not doubt that my colleague Reissiger, before whom I would beg Your Excellency to lay this plan, will have no serious objection to make, since he was entirely of the same mind when we last touched upon this matter [1] in the course of conversation. * * * *

122. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, 16*th March*, 1846.

* * You challenge me to take proceedings against the town gossip which is so extraordinarily busy with my affairs at the moment. Once upon a time Jean Paul met Goethe and they talked together of the disgraceful and malicious rumours which had from time to time been spread about each of them. Jean Paul said he would do nothing about that kind of gossip, or at least not till they said he stole silver spoons. Goethe said *he* would do nothing even then. Although, unfortunately, I cannot compare with a man like Goethe, I would follow him in opposing nothing but absolute contempt to this dirty town talk, which, the greater the heights of idiocy it attains, the sooner must collapse upon its own lack of foundation. After what you told me yesterday it really seems to me that the limit must have been reached and we may take it that, short of people spreading the news that I have shot or drowned myself, the end is in sight. I have been deeply moved by discovery of the tireless interest which centres upon my insignificant person, particularly when this interest is expressed in the invention, exaggeration and dissemination of rumours which under certain circumstances might do me real harm. If you think it would be any advantage to me to acquaint my friends with these reflections of mine, you can at your pleasure have these lines printed [2] in the *Anzeiger*.[3] * *

[1] Wagner's proposals were carried out.

[2] They were printed; cf. *Dresdener Anzeiger*, 18 March, 1846. Wagner's debts were the cause of the town gossip.

[3] *Advertiser*. (TRANS.)

123. TO LOUIS SPOHR, CASSEL

GROSS-GRAUPE, NEAR DRESDEN, *17th May*, 1846.

MOST REVERED MASTER!

* * * I feel very much obliged to my Herr General-Director at present, for he has granted me permission to have nothing to do with him for a whole quarter-year! Now shall I be ungrateful and use this first freedom he has allowed me to criticise his behaviour [1] to you? I should have to condemn him so severely that I am willing for the present to spare him my little panegyric out of gratitude. His method of procedure, which I first really came to know about through your letter, bears witness to an uncouthness in the man which seems almost laughable to me. Whom ought one to pity—these Junkers who are set like foxes to herd the geese and make themselves laughing-stocks at every step—or the artists who suffer under their errors of taste? Since you offer me the opportunity of conversing with you soon face to face, we may, I hope, while away an hour on this head. On the whole, though, I think you are fortunate, my dearest Master, if this insult is the *first* which you have been offered in the course of your great career as an artist; but I am bitterly sorry to have been in a sense a witness of the same without being able to prevent it, partly because it was too late, partly because our subordinate standing as regards the Theatre Intendant leaves us in a bad position to ward off indignities. However, you have given Herr von Lüttichau a thorough lesson, which, fortunately, *you* were just the person to do, and I for my part hope to God I may yet be able to do you some Dresden service commensurable with this piece of Dresden rudeness.

124. TO HERMANN FRANCK, DRESDEN

GROSS-GRAUPE, *30th May*, 1846.

I have just had a long argument with you—and *Lohengrin* is still the subject. I have returned to it again with a perfectly open mind and I have come to an understanding with *myself*. I have been contemplating my work, after a lapse of time, as far as possible as an unprejudiced stranger, and its poetic intention seems to me to run thus: Atonement for Elsa's lapse can only be made through her punishment, and seldom has a fault been linked with a more logical and inevitable punishment than is here expressed in the *parting*. Neither chastisement nor death (immediate) can form that

[1] Spohr had had his new opera *Die Kreutzfahrer*, which had been commissioned, returned to him after fourteen months, because in the meantime it had "lost the charm of novelty"!

punishment. Every other form of punishment would be arbitrary and would arouse indignation; but the punishment of *separation* —the hardest of all, indeed—appears inevitable and does *not* appear too hard, for it is the most just, the most logical. Elsa has forfeited Lohengrin, their union cannot stand, for once Elsa has asked the question they are thereby cut off from each other. The parting, the idea of the parting seemed to me the very heart and essence of the whole matter from my first acquaintance with the story and having run through other possible solutions I return with ever-increasing certainty to this *parting*. If it were to be omitted it would mean a complete transformation of the entire subject—only the most banal superficialities would be left. The symbolic meaning of the fable I hold to be that contact of the supernatural with human nature cannot last. The moral would seem to be that God (I mean the Christian God) would do better to withhold supernatural revelations from us, since he may not annul the laws of nature, and nature—human nature in this instance—revenges itself and thus brings the revelation to naught. This seems to me to be the meaning of most of those marvellous sagas which were not made by priests. What happened to Semele when Zeus approached her? But the question still remains as to whether or no my poem, conceived on this basis, is dramatically conclusive and effective, and this was what chiefly concerned you. I say that I do not doubt it, though I know it is a daring thing to leave the self-evident conclusion of a dramatic action wholly to the imagination of an audience as is done here when Lohengrin departs. The endeavour must be, therefore, to make the ultimate moment of parting appear as a positive act and this can be done by making the ultimate fate of *both* the separated lovers perfectly plain to the audience. Your doubts were of great assistance to me for they drew my attention very forcibly to the necessity of making Lohengrin's share in the tragic exit clearer than it was as it first stood. * * * *

125. TO ALWINE FROMMANN, BERLIN

DRESDEN, *9th October*, 1846.

* * * * Things are not well with me. I have not written a single note for more than two months. O God, if only *one* pleasant thing would happen to me! You have no idea what good it would do my health. A piece of really joyful news goes through my whole body like a refreshing thunder shower and does me more good than all the dietaries of all the physicians.

I have struck up a warm friendship with Auerbach during the last few days. He read me his new tale aloud and I told him for the first time the story of Tannhäuser. He is an excellent poet and what delight he takes in his poems! If I could only leave operatic composition alone and write books, I too should have a happier life. * * * *

126. TO EDWARD HANSLICK, VIENNA

DRESDEN, *1st January*, 1847.

* * * The trend, so favourable to me, of your comprehensive discourse [1] on my *Tannhäuser*, best pleases me as evidence of the impression my work made upon yourself. I must truthfully confess, if you would like to know my real feelings upon reading your paper, that it was a most anxious experience. Whether I read praise or blame of myself I always feel as if someone were seizing and examining my entrails. Neither have I outgrown a certain maidenly bashfulness as though my soul were my body. A public performance of one of my operas is still an occasion of such boundless emotional turmoil that I have frequently tried to prevent performances when I have felt unequal to this interior conflict.

I am fully convinced that blame is far more useful to the artist's self than praise. The man who is ruined by criticism deserves his fall—only he who accepts it as a challenge has true inward power. But it is, nevertheless, clear that the true artist in whom Nature herself has implanted passion at its strongest for a spur, is bound to feel either praise or blame very acutely.

As I create with ever-heightened artistic consciousness I am more and more impelled to make a whole man. I want to create flesh and blood and limbs, a being who freely and truly lives and moves, and I am often amazed when I see how many perceive only the flesh and examine its softness or hardness. Let me speak more plainly. To touch on one sphere only, nothing has satisfied me better than the effect upon the public at most performances of *Tannhäuser* * * of the whole scene of the Song Contest.[2] I have known each of the songs in it to be received with the liveliest interest, rising to unwonted heights of excitement during the last songs and at the outburst of horror in the assembly which closes the scene. I tell you this observation has immensely pleased me, because as an instance of extreme *naïveté* in the public it proves to me that the noblest ends are attainable. Very few could be sure whether they had the musician

[1] *Allgemeine Wiener Musikzeitung* (ed. by Dr. August Schmidt), 1846. Hanslick had sent a copy to Wagner.

[2] See No. 145.

or the poet to thank for this impression and I need only leave it an open question.

I naturally have no special ambition to see my poetry cast into the shade by my music, but I would certainly be guilty of a lie were I to pretend that my music was at the mercy of my poetry. I cannot make use of any poetic matter which is not first conditioned by music. My Song Contest, even though the poetic element predominates in it, could not have expressed my higher intentions without music.

But a work of art does not exist till it becomes apparent; in drama this means performance upon the stage. As far as lies in my power I mean to master this aspect and I value my capacity to do so effectively almost equally with the other faculties of my creative gift. * * *

* * * I would not care to venture a decision as yet as to whether music is, of its essence, able exactly to render the meaning of a poem, however musical the latter may be. Gluck's poems certainly make no very extreme demands upon the passionate possibilities of the music, being more or less confined to a certain limited pathos—that of the tragedies of Racine—and wherever this ought to have been overstepped, Gluck's music fails unmistakably to rise to the occasion. The poems of Mozart's operas are still less concerned with the deepest realities of human nature. *Donna Anna* is a single exception, but the possibilities are far from exhausted even there. Spontini in the second act of *The Vestal* (the Julia scene) and Weber in portions of *Euryanthe* (for instance the moment after the betrayal of her secret to Eglantine, etc.) have nothing better with which to meet the occasion than "diminished seventh music," and I, for my part, can only recognise here a limitation in our forefathers' musical achievements.

It is indisputable that we are far from having attained the highest and truest in opera as measured by these models—I speak of the dramatic work of art as a whole, not of the purely musical aspect—and in this conviction and relying on powers which I am more inclined to despair of than to over-estimate in myself, I regard my present and forthcoming works simply as experiments to ascertain the possibilities of opera. * * * *

A world of difference separates us, as shown by your estimate of Meyerbeer. I can say this without the least embarrassment, for I am personally friendly with him and have every reason to value him as a sympathetic and amiable person. But when I want to sum up everything which repels me in the trade of opera composition as being intellectually muddled and technically feeble, I comprehend

it under the word "Meyerbeer," and all the more so since I recognise an extraordinary knack of getting a superficial effect in Meyerbeer's music, a thing which hinders the true development of art by offering gratification divorced from spirituality. He who strays into the realm of the trivial has to pay for it by the loss of his higher nature, but he who deliberately seeks the trivial is—fortunate, for he has nothing wherewith to pay. * * *

127. TO BARON VON LÜTTICHAU, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, *9th July*, 1847.

Troublesome as my letters may prove, I must unhappily once again inflict a written communication upon Your Excellency. My position as regards the opera at the Royal Court Theatre has repeatedly brought trouble upon me * * and in certain moods I have often pondered the possibility of reconciling it with my position to withdraw from all responsibility for the business side of things, in which I am, in certain quarters, supposed to be deeply involved and on account of which I am exposed to views and opinions which injure me the more, the higher the influence they erroneously attribute to me.

How little weight my voice really has, Herr Dr. Gutzkow, among others, knows very well, and this makes his recent behaviour the more brazen. May I now draw Your Excellency's attention to a letter about theatrical affairs in Dresden, recently published in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*[1]? It is, in itself, a most depressing idea that a man who entered upon journalism but a short time ago, and since then has made himself but superficially acquainted with the theatre (though *very thoroughly* with the theatrical *chronique scandaleuse*) and has never evinced the slightest proof that he knows anything at all of the matter, should suddenly have attained to the chief technical control—almost even to the administrative control—of an institution which has previously produced good work. I should not, however, have felt I had any occasion to make a personal complaint in the interests of the *Opera* while I could suppose his instructions would have weight only in matters of the spoken drama. I could not, indeed, fail to observe to what a pass this man has brought matters in a very short space of time, how his tasteless and ignorant instructions and the pretensions he makes have brought upon him the scorn and laughter of the whole company of players, and therefore I could not remain indifferent when I discovered

[1] *Pan-German Newspaper.* (TRANS.)

almost immediately that the same man was to superintend the management of the opera also. It was principally this discovery which kept me away from Your Excellency at the beginning of the year. I will not attempt to deny that vexation was the cause of this. Your Excellency is aware what else came to light during this period. *The Queen's Musketeers* [Halévy's] was Herr Gutzkow's achievement, *Iphigenia in Aulis* was mine. This librettist's participation in the affairs of the opera, however, has reached what I can only call a climax of shameless impertinence since the newspaper report which I have cited. It is to be hoped he will not attempt to deny that the report was his own, for if he does it can be proved against him. In it Your Excellency can see the man as he is, and as he has long since plainly appeared to people who knew him previously—that is, a journalist, a maker of cliques, one who, as is clear in the present instance, cares not for the good of our opera but wishes to establish his own power in all departments and would like to choose the *personnel* of the opera from those who belong to his party. * * *

This ill-disposed person, who destroys confidence everywhere through his intrigues and calumnies, is preparing inevitable moral destruction for our whole enterprise, and is particularly troublesome to me, who am openly, warmly and enthusiastically working for high ends, and who, without this added burden, have only too frequently had to see my efforts rewarded by misunderstanding and suspicion. The sorrow with which I see myself doomed by this kind of thing to ever-increasing loathing and, as a consequence, to inactivity, to the non-fulfilment of the expectations justly based on my capacities, is so great and so just that if outward circumstances had been more favourable I should have had no hesitation in asking His Majesty for my *complete discharge.* * * * If Your Excellency cannot immediately see your way at least to inhibit Herr Dr. Gutzkow officially from interference with operatic affairs and from attendance at meetings dealing with opera, and if Your Excellency is unable to decide to give the management of the opera unreservedly into my hands as was formerly the case, * * I am determined to leave it to the wisdom of the King's Majesty to judge how far and in what manner my known capacities as dramatic composer and conductor of good music may be used in the service of His Majesty, and may render me eligible for a salary sufficient to enable me to fulfil my obligation to the Pension Fund,[1] but without laying upon me official duties touching operatic management which I could not conscientiously undertake in the spirit of my oath. * * * *

[1] This did not happen; with the result that Wagner's dissatisfaction with the Intendant increased. See Nos. 128 and 129.

128. TO FERDINAND HEINE, STAYING AT MARBACH, NEAR NOSSEN

DRESDEN, *6th August*, 1847.

* * * I am so full of contempt for the theatre as it is at present that, feeling I cannot now do anything to improve it, my dearest wish is to be able to get free of it altogether. * * You may have heard already that I completely broke with Lüttichau some three weeks ago and that from my side there can be no question of reconciliation. Gutzkow was the occasion of it. * * *

Now for a more pleasing communication! * * * Being sound and well I have completed the last two acts of my *Lohengrin*, have thereby finished the composition of this opera and am very happy about it, for I rejoice in my achievement. If things go well with *Rienzi* in Berlin, as I hope, *Lohengrin* will follow there immediately. The King of Prussia has been spending a week in Pillnitz (Lüttichau unfortunately made no use of the opportunity!). Those two, and probably the whole Court, must have spoken much of me, however, for the day after a great banquet Lüttichau came galloping into the town and ordered everything to be laid aside and *Rienzi* to be immediately put on (all this, you understand, *after* my catastrophe). Last Sunday we gave *Tannhäuser* again to a house *full to bursting*. The new close [1] went well, for even the visitors who on such occasions usually listen open-mouthed but don't stir a hand, became quite animated. * * * *

129. TO BARON VON LÜTTICHAU, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, *10th August*, 1847.

I beg Your Excellency graciously to consider that under existing circumstances and after my late experiences my desire to retire from my position as kapellmeister cannot but be a just one. While I am fully aware of the fact that on the one hand my affairs are not yet in order and, on the other, which is more important, that I owe it to a benefactor, to whom I am personally indebted for the greatest services, to pursue my project with due reflection and without precipitation, I think I may count upon Your Excellency's approval of my discretion. Accordingly, in humbly requesting Your Excellency to relieve me of official citations pending the settlement of this case, I am not afraid that it will be attributed to gross infraction of the duties of office, for I am still conscious that I have not neglected the essential obligations of a kapellmeister in the slightest degree. * * * *

[1] The one now customary—with the apparition of Venus and the bringing in of the corpse of Elizabeth.

130. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, STUTTGART

DRESDEN, *2nd September*, 1847.

Your works, my dear Herr von Bülow, have pleased me exceedingly. I would not like to return them to your friend Ritter without enclosing an encouraging word for yourself. I append no criticism. They will get enough of that without my adding to it and I am the less inclined to enumerate weaknesses and things which have not pleased me * * as I can see from the rest that you will soon be perfectly capable of criticising your earlier attempts yourself. * * *

131. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

BERLIN, *Monday, 20th September*, 1847.

* * * * Yesterday I dined at Meinhardt's Hotel, where I met Pfister. * * Pfister is beatifically enthusiastic over his part [Rienzi] and behaved with uncommon diffidence. He said if I took him up and taught him properly I could make his fortune, etc. Everything else, too, seems to be going well. I spent a long time with Taubert yesterday and find him also a reasonable and well-disposed person, very zealous for me. For the rest, I am convinced that for the present I have boundless influence at command here. They all assured me that the King's command was so categorical that I could ask what I liked and Küstner would have to obey me. The moment he opposed me in any matter, all I should have to do would be to go immediately to the Master of the Household, Prince Wittgenstein—or just threaten him with doing so. Well, we shall see! Anyhow, I have never been so well off as I am here. * * * *

132. TO THE SAME

BERLIN, *Thursday, 23rd September*, 1847.

* * * The family who took rooms on the same floor after I had done so, obliging me to move into others, has now arrived. They are the *Köster* family and I can hear Adriano practising close beside me now! An extraordinary meeting in this big Berlin!—Yesterday I was able to hold the first regular *ensemble* rehearsal and had much reason to be satisfied. Taubert has been industrious and even Mme. Köster, who only arrived late the previous evening, came straight away to rehearsal and proved that she had already been studying hard. The choruses are magnificent! What a blessing that is after Dresden! I had practised with Pfister the preceding day. Well, the

fellow has no lack of good will and, after all, his voice will pass muster, if one does not think of Tichatschek. Unfortunately the man is absolutely untaught—he does not even know the A B C. All the same he is not stupid, and I was surprised how comparatively quickly he picked up the knack of this and that when I pointed them out and showed him how to do them. After all, the part will carry him along and he will not hear of doubts as to his being able to last out. He says he could sing it all and not break down. * * * I spent all yesterday evening chatting away with my neighbour, Köster. He has an able, vigorous poet's brain and we got into deep subjects. He has a most excellent influence upon his wife. Her voice is pure and pleasing. She would make a very good Elsa here!

Yesterday I at last bethought myself it was high time I called on Meyerbeer who is here. I did not find him at home and left a card. He probably will not be too pleased about my *Rienzi*! Mme. Frommann is due here to-day. I have seen nothing of other acquaintances as yet, neither have I managed to visit Tieck at Potsdam.

* * * God! how satisfied one could be with Dresden if the little nest only had somewhat more weight in the musical world! There is no doubt that *here* there is a better vantage-ground for my work. * * * *

133. TO THE SAME

BERLIN, *Sunday, 26th September*, 1847.

* * * * Now a word about my affairs! They are going well * * and I am fully aware of my good fortune in being able to hold such regular rehearsals again, with everyone always punctual to the minute and taking things seriously — no chatter — sheer uninterrupted zeal! When I think that that ass of a Dettmer used always to think he was doing me a favour by singing Colonna! I may detect a trace of this feeling in Bötticher and others, but they are always in dead earnest over their work and in return I shall get a capital *ensemble*. I can naturally expect to get the best Irene here, and the duet in the last act will be a shining example of what we have long missed in Dresden! Mme. Köster is almost too good for Adriano. There is something very virginal, very womanly about her—far more so than Johanna, who seems to me rather heavy by comparison. Besides this there is an uncommonly gracious charm in her voice—in short I am rejoicing in an "Elsa." Bötticher approached me to give the *Dutchman* again too with Mme. Köster! Just at present Pfister is taking the place of Peps with me! He is forever at my heels and never leaves my side. I am indulging him for I get on good

terms with him so and can the better take him in hand without offending him. * * * *

* * * To-day is my first completely free day and I shall use it to visit Tieck at Potsdam. Mme. Frommann asserts that Tieck may be of the greatest use to me with the King!—Lord! I have *still* not seen Meyerbeer! * * * *

134. TO FERDINAND HILLER, DRESDEN

BERLIN, *6th October*, 1847.

* * * My foolish friend, are you still letting yourself be led astray by talk? Well then, let me tell you the simple literal truth. Apart from Herr von Küstner and the local managers and singers I have not done business with a soul in Berlin. Consequently I do not know if I have been thought of for any kapellmeister's position, but I *do* know that I have not my eye on one here. As long as I have got to be a kapellmeister for my livelihood I had much rather be one in Dresden than here, and this for a thousand reasons, each of which I am ready to swear to on oath. You know how much I should like to have a modest pension so as to be able to read the many books I possess and others which I should like to buy, but as long as I have no such pension I will bear my kapellmeister's yoke in Dresden.

There is no doubt that it would be a good thing if Hennig were pensioned off. The singers say he is past his work, but I see that he goes on with it, and will, I imagine, for some time to come.

Taubert told me he had heard that Lachner had an eye on the supposedly approaching vacancy. The latter is intimate with Küstner, and if the day of pensioning Hennig could be hastened it would doubtless be Küstner's dearest wish to appoint Lachner. * * * *

135. TO JOHANN KITTL, PRAGUE

DRESDEN, *4th January*, 1848.

* * * * I lay very ill when your letter came. A little before, I had received an anonymous letter from Leipzig reproaching me vituperatively for what I am supposed to have said about Mendelssohn's death, from which I can only suppose that some baseness or other has been attributed to me and spread abroad. What am I to do? That I have a considerable number of enemies in Dresden is natural enough. * * * My retired habit of life is to blame for all manner of foolish rumours about me. When I am not at work I am always at my house, which is very secluded, and any malicious calumniation of my character is readily believed, few being in a

position to deny it authoritatively as very few are intimate with me. * * * [He then writes at length about the libretto of *Die hohe Braut or Bianca and Giuseppe* set to music by Kittl.]

The change of ending hurts me most. Do you know what the close of a piece is? *Everything!* I counted very much on the intense stormy swiftness of this close. The terrible catastrophe on the exit from the church ought not to be softened down in any way—the thing that throws it into high relief is the approach of a great world event, here personified in the French Revolutionary Army which, as it sweeps on in its terrible glory, tramples underfoot the wreckage of the old order (the family). In my view nothing ought to be done to weaken this effect if the close is to be, as I planned it, the greatest moment of the whole. * * * The general public need not go so deeply into things, but it receives the right impression instinctively when that right impression is clearly and forcefully conveyed. * * * I earnestly implore you to take heed to what I say to you for your good![1] Don't put my name on the bills. I think you might put it so!—"*Die hohe Braut*, Great Tragic Opera in Four Acts, after the Romance of the same name by H. König, set to music by J. Kittl." Farewell, my dearest Hans! God give you happiness and fame and spare you trouble as far as may be, so that your slim[2] figure takes no harm.

136. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

DRESDEN, 30*th January*, 1848.

MY GOOD FRIEND!

Herr Halbert tells me you would like to have my overture to Goethe's *Faust*. I have no reason for withholding it, save that I no longer like it; but I send it to you because the point is, after all, whether *you* will like it! If this should be so, my work is at your command, only I should prefer to have the manuscript back some time at your convenience. * * * *

137. TO MARTIN OBERLÄNDER, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, 16*th May*, 1848.

I humbly take the liberty of asking for an attentive hearing in the interests of an institution the fate of which, as a source of honour and utility to the country, now hangs in the balance. What I have to say will occupy an hour, and the question is whether it would be

[1] Although Kittl did not take Wagner's advice in the matter of an effective choral finale, his opera, which was first produced on 19 February, 1848, under the title of *The French at Nice*, met with lasting success.

[2] Ironical: Kittl was very corpulent.

possible for you to give me this hour either to-morrow (Wednesday) or some time during Thursday at latest? If so, I must also venture to ask you to be so kind as to persuade the Minister of State, Herr Dr. von der Pfordten, to be present at the hearing granted me, as I am a little uncertain to which Government department the affairs I desire to discuss really belong, and should like to submit the decision in this matter to the personal judgment of the Minister of the Interior and of Religion. Special circumstances have rendered the matter so pressing that I feel it my duty to ask most urgently for the honour of a speedy reply.[1] * * *

138. TO WIGARD,[2] FRANKFORT-ON-MAIN

DRESDEN, 19*th May*, 1848.

* * * I am apprehensive of widespread mischief if the German Parliament does not forthwith determine the following: (1) The hitherto existing Federal Diet to be dissolved, Parliament thereby concentrating the constitutional power solely in itself, with authority to nominate the executive power from among its own members, provisionally and exceptionally. (2) The immediate introduction of the system of arming the people, according to the method accepted amongst us. (3) An offensive and defensive alliance with France. —These three measures would be sufficient to give direction to the inevitable struggle. In every town the two parties would be clearly and sharply divided, the Frankforters (German) and the Party of the Special Régime[3]: thus the matter would come to the issue. The fourth step would then be to deal with the territorial question of the German States. If the task of embodying the conception of a united Germany is to fall to the Frankfort Assembly, it must first of all tackle the problem of the inequality of the States comprising it. It must appoint a commission, which, working upon the principle of allowing no State of under four or over six millions of inhabitants, must bring forward a proposal for the re-establishment of the stability of the German States upon a reasonable and natural basis. That is, after all, the critical point without which all our doings would be simply so much patchwork.

[1] The audience took place but Wagner did not succeed in winning consideration for his "Reorganisationsentwurf einnes deutschen Nationaltheaters für das Königreich Sachsen" (A Scheme for the Reorganisation of a National Theatre in the Kingdom of Saxony) (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. ii.).

[2] Wigard was one of the Saxon delegates to the German National Assembly opened on 18 May, 1848, which met in St. Paul's Church, Frankfort. Wagner got to know him through Röckel. In this letter he summarises the political views he wishes Wigard to represent.

[3] "Spezialregierungspartei." (TRANS.)

The princes will now determine their own lot by their own behaviour. If they begin by being inimical, if they protest, they are one and all to be placed in the dock, and the accusation brought against them will be established on a perfectly historical basis. Not until these questions have been settled and these fights fought out can the Assembly proceed to the work of constitutional government. This cannot be undertaken until we have cleared the ground. How useless a constitution would be to Germany in its present condition! Parliament must first thoroughly revolutionise the individual States and that is to be done by its first decree, for through this decree the parties will get the support which they now lack. If you could share this view of mine and exert every power to influence the Assembly in this direction you would do a deathless service. No more gentle means can lead to the goal! * * *

139. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, *17th June*, 1848.

* * * * You are aware that for various reasons I allowed myself to be misled into publishing three of my operas at my own charges. Probably I should not now be lamenting my decision if the capital employed had been my own, for I have got back far more than the interest and that at a time when my operas have scarcely got farther than Dresden. Even Berlin cannot have affected the proceeds much, for the performance of my *Rienzi* there was unfortunate for special reasons and so failed to make the necessary impression. The important thing, however, is that Vienna, which has hitherto been closed to me by the censorship, will henceforth be open to me and, following it, practically all the good theatres which have not as yet tried their fortunes with my operas. This, which I mention in passing, is what now inclines me to get rid of the burden of this affair. Moreover, being originally without capital, I have neither time nor patience to wait for a happier turn of events, and since my creditors are asking for their capital, I am anxious to settle the matter and so get some of the peace of mind necessary for the pursuance of my art. I therefore offer you the chance of buying up this concern, namely the three operas *Rienzi*, *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser*. If you agree to take over all the unsold copies, Herr Meser of Dresden, who has hitherto acted as agent for the publication, will give you an exact account of the capital expended. The profits already made would be deducted therefrom and the remainder, without any honorarium for the author, would represent the sum for which you would acquire ownership of the enterprise.

As from previous correspondence with you I have reason to believe that you would have been willing to undertake publication of my operas if I had required no honorarium, I feel tolerably confident that you will have no serious objection to such an arrangement as this. Although by this step I abandon once for all all profits on my works, the sacrifice seems small to me in return for the orderly settlement of my business affairs which I so earnestly desire, and I therefore heartily hope that you will accede to my proposal [1] with all possible speed. * * *

140. TO BARON VON LÜTTICHAU, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, 18*th June*, 1848.

I humbly beseech Your Excellency for the favour of some fourteen days' leave of absence within the town for the purpose of observing a particular diet to combat the gastric trouble of which I have symptoms.

At the same time I feel it a duty to myself to justify myself in a step [2] which, though it is entirely unconnected with my artistic duties, I should not like you to misunderstand.

Now that it is admittedly the right of the least educated to speak his mind on the state of public affairs, the educated man will feel it a strict duty to make full use of this right. No observer can fail to view with anxiety the acute clash of opinion which party collisions of the last fortnight have brought to a head amongst our townspeople. I have myself joined an association in which the views of the party of progress find very decided expression; on the one hand because I recognise that the party of progress is the party of the future, on the other, because I consider this party particularly needs intellect and moderation of sentiment to restrain it from wild excesses. I have, however, seldom attended its meetings and, when I have done so, have never taken part in debate but have remained simply an observer. Thus I have recently formed the opinion that a very serious spirit of defiance is being fostered there, mainly by the violent attacks of so-called Monarchists. According to present-day ideas the opinion that a republic is the best form of government is in itself no crime. Most people, however, go on to link this opinion up with a belief that the Monarchy must necessarily be done away. I have never known a speaker or political writer pay attention to

[1] His proposal was rejected.

[2] The reading aloud at the Vaterlandsverein on 15 June of an article, published in the *Dresdener Anzeiger* on 14 June, entitled "Wie verhalten sich republikanische Bestrebungen dem Königtum gegenüber" (The Relationship of Republican Aspirations to the Monarchy).

the idea that the Monarchy might remain the sacred focus round which popular institutions might gravitate; they always reason as though the abolition of monarchy were the logical outcome of the republican idea. * * * I accordingly felt it incumbent on me to show the public quite clearly that, while we might strive to achieve all that is attainable, the Monarchy does not in itself stand in direct opposition to our aspirations—in fact that our ideal would accord well with, and be more durable under, the Monarchy. Now, the present constitution of the Court with its numerous forms and ceremonies from earlier ages, is an offence to the democratic party. I have heard men of by no means the roughest class speak of it in terms which have given me deep insight into the mind of the people. They argue, approximately, that "If the King goes, the Court will go!" I ask, then, is the Monarchy to be threatened on account of mere forms and ceremonies? Surely, no! These forms may pass away and with them a source of the dissatisfaction which tends to be directed against the Throne. Following this line of reflection, I pondered on what the effects of such a change would really be, and came to the conclusion that with it the causes of grievance against the Monarchy would disappear. I naturally then felt the desire to convince both parties, Monarchists as well as Republicans, upon this line of argument, and if possible to lead them to make common cause on the basis of the preservation of the Monarchy *with* the consequent safeguarding of civil order. At the same time I wanted to try to throw light on the noble word "Republic," the real meaning of which is so misunderstood by the Republican Party, and finally, to demonstrate that within the Republic the Monarchy would at last find its noblest sphere of action. This desire alone urged me to compose my pamphlet. * * * When last I attended a meeting of the Association I again heard the kind of talk which inextricably links the republican idea (now undoubtedly the chief idea of a large proportion of the populace) with the idea of the overthrow of the Throne. In the full conviction that I ought to put sound and wholesome ideas before the minds of those present, I decided, upon the spur of the moment, to read my pamphlet forthwith, and even if this step of mine failed of its good purposes in general, it yet undoubtedly achieved *one* in particular, for never, certainly, in the assemblies of this Association have the praises of our King been so enthusiastically proclaimed, nor so enthusiastically received, as at the close of my talk in which I lauded his high virtues. It is just this applause and the reason for it which has awakened envy and opposition against me. I will not further develop here my views of many of these popular leaders, but I am filled

with the gravest fears, for it was just my enthusiasm for the Monarchy which particularly displeased them. I am quite indifferent, however, to what I may have to suffer at the hands of these people. It will be a very different thing if I have to fear the complete misunderstanding of the other side, if the King himself, whether or no he thinks my formula practicable, should think it ill-judged in me to have held up a poetic vision of the Monarchy as I conceive it before a very prosaically led section of the populace. I must admit that I am much grieved at seeing many indications that I have in fact been misunderstood. I recognise thereby the danger at such times as these of expressing some independent line of thought, not entirely the property of one or other party, and it did not need my wife's entreaty to make me resolve never again to take a personal part in the questions of the day. I see to my sorrow that the time for intellectual weapons is past. A gloomy and terrible foreboding weighs on my spirit that the struggle will soon be conducted by the roughest elements of the populace. * * *

* * * If my dark predictions prove baseless—oh, so much the better! But if the step I took has aroused bitterness it has failed of my intention. If it has brought *offence* instead of *reconciliation* it has been a mistake for which I earnestly ask pardon of all those I have injured.[1] * * *

141. TO EDWARD DEVRIENT, DRESDEN [2]

DRESDEN, 19*th June*, 1848.

MY GOOD FRIEND,

I heartily regret the heat which misled me into making a public and personal appearance with my pamphlet. I seem to have been terribly misunderstood and a number of signs go to show that there is an attempt to injure my credit seriously with the King. Now I ask you to do a really friendly office. You have just the personality and powers of persuasive speech to go to Court and plead my cause with the King! See what can be done with the weapons of the spirit and of virtue unstained to convince those concerned of my good intentions and dissuade them if possible from a step which, certainly to me—and possibly to you too—may be very prejudicial.

What more can I say to you? I entreat you for your friendly help! You will not be able to refuse it me! * *

[1] This was accorded him, as we deduce from No. 142. See also No. 141.
[2] First published by Dr. Obser in the *Deutsche Revue*, January 1922.

142. TO BARON VON LÜTTICHAU, DRESDEN

DRESDEN, *20th June*, 1848.

Excellent man! Since it was my honest intention to reconcile I believed I could strike out freely right and left! Now you show me where real reconciliation is to be found—where there is no possibility of wounding!

Might I suppose that a truly noble man, conscious of his own virtue, would really [not] feel wounded by me and my opinions, and could I, upon this supposition alone, feel it within the bounds of decorum to approach you, as I have recently done, with my letters, it is yet for no other reason than my own weakness that I now confess to you that I never really knew you and your worth till I received from you the reassurance which Edward Devrient has just brought me. One wish remains in the depths of my soul—were all men like *you*!

I hope this hasty word may serve to show you what the effect has been on me of this news from you! * * *

P.S. This time I have forgotten "Excellency" and everything of the kind! Forgive me—I could not write otherwise!

143. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

VIENNA, *11th July*, 1848.

* * * * I have only just found peace to sit down and write to you. The first two days in Vienna have been very exciting—particularly all the running backwards and forwards. Now I will tell you all about it! The journey was slow. * * * We did not reach Breslau till eight o'clock in the evening. After I had had a hurried look at the town I visited Mosevius, who was immensely glad to see me and we sat up together till one. The next day but one, Saturday, we set out for Vienna at two o'clock in the afternoon. After a horrible night (third-class on the Austrian railway inflicted the torments of hell!) I got to Vienna on Sunday morning at 8. * * *

* * * Even in Breslau I felt as if I had exchanged Dresden for Paris—this magnificent democratic life! Burghers with white staves instead of police, the National Guard in blouses and plumed hats, public hawkers at every street corner selling news-sheets, "No more Monarchy—Inauguration of the Two-Chamber System," etc. At a railway-station in Moravia we met the new Governor. All stations were decorated with German flags. But as for Vienna, seen again on a beautiful bright Sunday, I must say it quite enchanted me! I have found Paris again, only more beautiful, gayer and German. During the 16 years since last I saw it the whole city has been renovated. Its half-million inhabitants, bedecked in the German

colours, paraded the streets on Sunday in jubilation. On the previous Saturday evening a wavering, incapable Ministry had just been overthrown by the energy of the National Committee! You ought to see these people's faces. Everything which repels you in the Dresden people you would find different and attractive here. * * *

* * * Yesterday at last I met Bauernfeld. He is now a thorough hypochondriac—I heard that he was quite insane for a couple of months. He takes the most gloomy view and thinks the times hopelessly unsuitable for starting rehearsals. He may be right, but I am not going to lose all my trouble on that account and at midday to-day have a rendezvous with a Dr. Frankl, whom even Bauernfeld recommended to me as very active, clever and influential. * * *

12th July.

I wanted to write more yesterday afternoon, but did not get home as from now on I am in the thick of Viennese hospitality. I have found my man—namely, Professor Fischhof, a man who possesses my operas. I met him at midday yesterday and spent the whole day with him and far into the night. Do you know, he seemed to understand my whole being and aspirations forthwith. Even before I told him of my plan he said he was delighted that I liked Vienna, for he might in that case hope I would some time settle here and exercise a wide influence. I then laid my scheme [1] before him. He entered into it at once and proposed the following plan of campaign. The new Minister of Education, Exner, a man of very able brain of whom everyone expects great things, is Fischhof's friend. He will introduce me to him and we shall then try to get the Minister to embody the matter in his draft budget for expenditure on public instruction and to nominate a commission to go into the subject and decide how much can be put in force immediately as a beginning. In any case there is one thing which has to be considered—the present complete pre-occupation of all politicians in the critical political situation. Still, I am pressing on and am urging that the principle shall at least have official recognition, and that it shall be put into execution when and where possible, a matter which chiefly concerns the Kärntnertor-Theater (Opera House) which is now without a manager and on the point of being wound up. Fischhof has high hopes and thinks there is money to be had in Vienna. * * *

* * * Even if the whole plan cannot be carried out forthwith, after this very sympathetic reception I feel sure that my presence here will bear fruit. * * * *

[1] Cf. *My Life*, pp. 444–46. The plan was not carried out.

MINNA WAGNER

From a photograph by H. Weger, Leipzig. In the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig

144. TO THE SAME

VIENNA, *15th July*, 1848.

* * * * My Viennese ship is answering the helm famously. On Monday afternoon at 4 o'clock there is to be an important meeting at Fischhof's where my plan is to be submitted to them all for acceptance. After my name had appeared in the list of visitors I at once received a number of calls, among others from Dr. Bacher (very rich and enthusiastic) who was very pleased with my project. I have also won another influential supporter in Privy-Councillor Vesque von Püttlingen (composer, under the name of "Hoven," of the opera *Jeanne d'Arc*). * * * He was enchanted with my scheme and at once asked for copies for the Ministers to acquaint them with the matter in advance. But they all think that I could only get the Kärntnertor-Theater on one condition, which is that I resign from Dresden and take over the re-equipment and management of this theatre. I said that in Dresden I had a Royal appointment for life with a fine salary, etc., but that if my hopes for Vienna were fully realised I hoped my King would shortly release me. They were all satisfied with this. * * *

* * * I am chiefly with Fischhof and we are almost always together as he takes me about with him everywhere. He is a most excellent fellow, with an uncommonly wide circle of acquaintance and very well thought of by all, high and low. * * * For the rest, the chief difference between Vienna and all other towns at present is that there is no party friction here. There is *one* party only, the Radical. The Court Party is established at Innsbruck, but no one troubles his head about it. * * * *

145. TO BARON VON BIEDENFELD, WEIMAR

DRESDEN, *17th January*, 1849.

I have always strongly objected to seeing the whole vast apparatus of dramatic action, situation, history, supported by every known art, painting, sculpture, gymnastics, and the rest, used simply to impress upon the public memory so many catchy melodies. I am convinced that the only end commensurate with all this expenditure ought to be nothing less than the dramatic work of art itself, and that the opera is therein superior to the play in that to all the other means of expression it adds that most rich, most various, most inexhaustible one of music. Now the Greeks, and perhaps even in part the makers of our mediaeval drama, could successfully help out the play, through the addition of music, without

materially altering the former. In our own age, however, the heroes of absolute music—that is to say, music divorced from the poet's art—culminating in Beethoven, have, chiefly through the orchestra, developed the expressive capacity of this art till it has acquired a new artistic potency, scarcely dreamed of even by Gluck, and the influence of music upon the drama has become so important that it naturally has claims to make in regard to the unfolding of its own riches. The drama, then, must enlarge its sphere of expression and the discovery and exploitation of its capacity to respond to the riches of musical expression seemed a possibility to me solely from the musician's point of view. If by so doing I was making a poet of the musician, all the less could I allow him to lose sight of the main end of the drama itself, for his own particular art—music—was but now to be enlisted in the service of this highest of all artistic aims. His true task must therefore seem to me to be that of becoming fully and inwardly conscious of the riches of musical expression, while desiring nothing but drama, a type of drama, be it understood, which could never come to birth apart from this musical consciousness in the dramatist. To make this perfectly plain I will refer to an important scene in my *Tannhäuser*, the Song Tournament scene. It is clear that to precipitate the catastrophe by means of this scene in particular, the dramatist's or poet's aspect must, and indeed alone *could*, be the predominating aspect. To allow the singers to predominate by the arts of song, grace notes and cadenzas would have produced the impression of song competition, but not of a dramatic contest of thought and emotion. On the other hand this poetic warfare, in which the very souls of the participants are at stake, could never, in my opinion, be presented with full dramatic effect without the intense and manifold power of musical expression, and I have been pleased to find that it is just this daringly experimental scene which gets the liveliest and keenest sympathy of the audience at each performance. With it I had the triumph of gripping our very unaccustomed public here through thought and not merely through emotion.

Let me summarise shortly. I struck out my line as a musician, who, setting out with the conviction of the inexhaustible riches of music, wishes to follow the highest branch of art, namely the drama. I say *wishes to* in order to define my aspirations at once. Whether I *can* do so, I am not in a position to judge, and if I go astray it will be the fault of my feeble capacity, but not of my righteous intention. * * * *

146. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

DRESDEN, *20th February*, 1849.

DEAR FRIEND LISZT!

* * * Not a theatre [1] in the world has as yet thought well to produce my opera *Tannhäuser*, brought out four years ago. *You* had to come from the ends of the earth first, to settle for a time at the seat of a little Court Theatre, and forthwith you set to work to help your much-tried friend! You did not say much or make much ado, but applied yourself to the unaccustomed work and rehearsed my opera. * * * *

But you did not want only to benefit my work, you wanted to benefit me also. You knew that I, in my present situation, was thrown back upon myself—a rather lonely, rather forsaken man. You wanted to get me *friends*. * * *

Dear friend, at this moment of all moments by so doing, you have raised my spirits like magic * * for the very same week that *Tannhäuser* was performed in Weimar I suffered such vile affronts [2] from my Intendant here, that for several days I strove with myself as to whether I could any longer bear to endure such degrading treatment, for the sake of the bit of bread my official position gives me, and whether I should not rather drop art, earn my bread as a day labourer, and so escape further exposure to the malicious ignorance of a despot. * * *

147. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, LEIPZIG

DRESDEN, *25th February*, 1849.

* * * Minna trusts my style rather than her own, worthily to convey our good wishes for your birthday. But while I am writing, she is baking a *Bäbe*.[3] My better half, who is daily striving to be of more use in the world, has—as you will have seen from the Christmas dainties which you have *not* received—dedicated herself to bakery with uncommon success, while I—as you also see—am devoting myself heart and soul to improving my handwriting by the study of the *Latin script*.[4] Thus we hope that, come what may, we shall at least get through life with dexterity. * * * *

[1] Except Dresden. It was performed in Weimar on 16 February, 1849.

[2] Because on 12 February Wagner explained his scheme for reform to members of the orchestra in the so-called "Kapellverein," von Lüttichau read him a lecture and treated him in a very offensive manner.

[3] A Christmas cake. (TRANS.)

[4] Hitherto Wagner had always used German script.

148. TO AUGUST RÖCKEL, PRAGUE

DRESDEN, *2nd May*, 1849.

DEAREST FRIEND!

* * * * Things are very disturbed here. All associations, the whole Communal Guard too and even the Prince Albert Regiment stationed here, have declared vigorously for the German Constitution. So has the Town Council. A decisive conflict is expected to occur, if not with the King, at any rate with the Prussian troops. Only one thing is feared—the too early outbreak of a revolution. Under such conditions reactionary steps on the part of the Government are unthinkable and there is no trace of an attempt at anything of the kind.

Hungarian Hussars have arrived in Freiberg from Bohemia. Everyone says we are ready for them. In short, great excitement prevails here. * * * *

END OF PART II

PART III

YEARS OF BANISHMENT UP TO THE DEPARTURE FROM ZURICH

1849–1858

PART III

YEARS OF BANISHMENT UP TO THE DEPARTURE FROM ZURICH

1849–1858

149. TO EDWARD DEVRIENT, DRESDEN [1]

WEIMAR, *Ascension Day* [*17th May*], 1849.

DEAREST FRIEND!

Heavy at heart, yet firmly resolved, I turn to you to-day once again for help and counsel in deed and word. The great storm, which at last broke after a long period of almost unbearable sultry heat, was so violent and so awful in its effects that none surely who were near the storm centre can have remained untouched in character and soul. I hope * * you and your family have escaped unharmed from the Dresden catastrophe. Both chance and my own sympathies involved me in many ways. As long as I was able to understand the Dresden Rising, I was, as a matter of course, in full sympathy with it, a fact which I did not, indeed, reveal by any overt act to the masses, though I expressed my mind to certain individuals. I held no brief for the Red Republican fables but, open-eyed, I saw the banner of the "German Constitution" (it was not for this the masses stood up to be shot, I grant you!) as the symbol of the very natural indignation of citizens and people against a prince who called in foreign troops to coerce public opinion, and also of the fury of local patriotism at seeing Prussia of all countries, to whom Saxony has lost so much already, stepping in to take the rest of the country. No man of sense will believe that the revolution was deliberately planned, as had this been so, at any rate the most important strategical positions in the town would not have been left from the first to the military. The storming of the Arsenal was the violent act of an unarmed people, who felt themselves betrayed when the parade of the City Militia was prohibited. I was a close and exceedingly anxious spectator of every overt act, particularly the setting up of a Committee of Public

[1] First published by Dr. Obser, *Deutsche Revue*, January 1922.

Safety at the Town Hall which, after the terrible things that had occurred, seemed to me to hold out hope of keeping the movement within proper bounds in the sense that the remarkable unanimity of magistrates and people might not only render further bloodshed impossible, but might also lead to opportune yielding on the part of the King. With this idea in mind, on the second day, when the town had already been barricaded, I directed my individual energies as far as I could do so (without publicly putting myself to the fore) to preventing further conflicts between the people and the military. I suggested to a couple of soldiers, whom I came across at the barracks near the Arsenal, that when next they found themselves face to face with the people they had only to tell them they would be with them when foreign troops were to be dealt with. I said the same to the men at the barricades as I passed, pointing out that instead of irritating the military they should simply ask them whether they would hold for them against foreign troops. This question was actually written on a placard and affixed to the barricade. To me it seemed of the first importance that by this means, or some other, fraternisation should be brought about between the troops and the people, not only that a Prussian invasion might be successfully withstood, but more particularly that the Movement might be set from the first upon the right lines as regards internal affairs. Only common opposition to the Prussian invasion and common support of the German Constitution could have brought about a real alliance of the Saxon troops with the Saxon people. Combined representations made to the King of Saxony from both army and people must necessarily have had the desired result of freeing him from stifling Prussian influences and thereby effectively preventing the whole Movement from excesses in other directions. I also told one of the Town Councillors whom I have long known intimately of my emphatic wish that someone would negotiate with the Military Governor to get a detachment of the military attached to the Committee of Public Safety. The election of a Provisional Government did not at first alarm me, as Heubner and Todt offered guarantees not to let the Movement deviate from its true end and to conduct appropriate negotiations with the King. Indeed, I felt absolutely blissful when I discovered that half the Arsenal had been conceded to the occupation of the City Militia and I had high hopes that the conspiracy of the Prussian Cabinet would be broken by Saxony—perhaps even without bloodshed. However, the third day was to annihilate my hopes. An armistice was proclaimed, Prussian troops arrived, and our troops *joined with them* against the people. There were no bounds to the bitterness of feeling aroused by this

and, though I was not from then on so close a spectator, I can assure you absolutely that the subsequent embittered and ruthless resistance of the holders of the barricades was due, not to Red Republicans or Blue, not to Poles or Russians, but simply and solely to the subjective, personal rage of citizens and people against the military. This fury was nourished by more particular hatred of the Riflemen's Guild from Leipzig who as a corps, in their turn, cherished rancour (unnaturally fostered by their officers) against the Dresdeners, to whom they had had to give place at one time in 1830. On Saturday and Sunday I was an inactive spectator of the struggle from the most advantageous view-point possible—the tower of the Kreuzkirche [1]—since despite my wife's entreaties I could not stay quietly at home. Early on Monday I once more tried at the Town Hall to get information as to the state of affairs, and saw that there was at any rate a great change. The pressure of circumstances and the necessity of conducting the defence on absolutely military lines had led to a search for strategists, for the Commandant of the Civil Militia appeared to lack capacity and energy. A certain Pole was recommended as versed in strategy and urgently pressed to undertake the preparation of a military plan of defence. It is untrue that Poles took part from the first. Irresolute, uncertain as to my own present attitude to the Movement, I left the town on Monday morning at 8 o'clock and took my wife (who had already packed) to Chemnitz, to one of my married sisters there.[2] On the way we were met by numbers of men riding in from the most outlying parts of the country, and the keenness, courage and endurance which I found on all hands quite overcame me. We interchanged news, I told them what I knew of the state of the struggle in Dresden, and the naked truth served to fire them to a swifter march. Towards evening I met the whole Communal Guard of Chemnitz, who surrounded our carriage asking for news from Dresden. To my communications some of them replied that they had quite different news, namely, that Dresden was already in the hands of the Prussians. They compelled me to go to the Town Hall to prove my words and there I realised that I had to do with people who had been *forced* to set out for Dresden and had now eagerly seized upon false rumours as a pretext for an immediate return home. My news upset their plans and they wanted to arrest me on suspicion of being a deserter. I could only clear myself of this by promising to return to Dresden next morning after having escorted my wife to Chemnitz. My word of honour was demanded and I could not go back on it, but, apart from this, I felt it necessary to return to Dresden to

[1] Church of the Holy Cross. [2] Clara Wolfram.

look after some relatives there and to see how matters stood. The mail-coach took me as far as the Feldschlöschen,[1] and there I found that one might safely get to the Town Hall, though not to other quarters of the town. Arrived at the Town Hall, I had the opportunity of learning the true state of affairs. The timorous Todt and the cowardly Tzchirner had fled, and the leader of the Left Centre, Heubner, was the only one who had remained on the spot, showing dignity, persistence and presence of mind. An affecting incident gave me the opportunity of getting to know Heubner a little. A member of the Communal Guard belonging to the personnel of the Theatre, came and begged me to intercede for young Fürstenau, who had been seized by the people on suspicion of having fired upon them from a window and had been placed under arrest. I at once asked Heubner for an audience and on various grounds which I put before him tried to induce him to share my own conviction of the prisoner's innocence. Heubner reassured me and promised me that the affair should be satisfactorily settled. After an hour's stay, as my way to my relatives was barred to me, I looked for an opportunity of returning to Chemnitz, but how to accomplish this by night and with the impossibility of getting carriage or mail-coach? An acquaintance of mine of the University, now adjutant of the Civil Militia Commando, was ordered to go as courier with all speed to Freiberg to bid the Chemnitz Communal Guard make all speed upon their march. To this end he received power to commandeer mail-coach and horses and I made use of this circumstance to get away. The next day but one I went back again, to discover what had occurred during the night and travelled by the mail-coach which was returning empty from Freiberg to Tharandt. Halfway I was suddenly met by some 2000 men in perfectly orderly retreat from the barricades. I get out, manage to reach Heubner's carriage, and learn that the intention is to make Freiberg the seat of the Provisional Government. Outside Freiberg an emissary of the Chemnitz Civil Militia meets Heubner and invites him to establish the Provisional Government at Chemnitz. Besieged by wealthy Freibergers imploring him not to ruin their city, Heubner gives way and lets the Volunteer corps proceed to Chemnitz after a short halt, while he himself, hoping at last to be able to snatch a few hours' rest in a bed, hurries on ahead to Chemnitz, gives his name at the city gate (partly because he thought it unnecessary to assume disguise, partly because it seemed to him unworthy to do so) and settles down with a few companions to sleep at the inn. Thereupon the rich manufacturers of Chemnitz have him waked

[1] A restaurant.

by gendarmes, taken to Altenburg, and handed over to the Prussian military authorities.

Sudden and brief as was our acquaintance, the warmest personal interest binds me to Heubner. He was the noblest, the most steadfast, the most honourable *and* the most unfortunate hero of the Revolution. I am bitterly grieved for him. Bakunin, with his terrible forcefulness, was thrust upon him by sheer pressure of circumstances at a time when everything was crumbling about him. At a moment which called for energy and nothing but energy he could not drive the man from him, extreme as was the goal he aimed at compared with Heubner's own. But had Heubner been himself a sheer naked revolutionary, determined on victory and on victory alone (the only type which will be victorious in future!), had he taken no notice of the whimperings of the rich bourgeoisie of Freiberg or Chemnitz, but let the terrible logic of revolution take its course, he would not have fallen and the Cause would not have been lost. All this, however, has shown me that we are none of us revolutionaries, I least of all. We want a Revolution in order to be able quickly to build up something good upon it, and for this cause Revolution disowns us utterly. The true, the victorious revolutionary must desire destruction only, and his strength must be found in *hate* alone, not in the *love* which governed us.—

I begin by giving you this exact account so that you may have an accurate idea of my part in what occurred. I followed the rising at first with full sympathy, on the two middle days with exasperation, and on the last two days with the most intense excitement and curiosity, but at no time did I take active part either by deeds or public speaking and I never had any official standing under the Provisional Government. I have, however, no difficulty in guessing at what will be the reactionary party's capacity for baseness and perfidy under the shelter of Prussian bayonets in Saxony, and I have already felt a sense of insecurity at Chemnitz with my relatives. A certain section of the Civil Militia, now very much to the fore, have charged me with high treason in the matter of my meeting with them upon the road. News from my Leipzig relatives goes to prove that there too I am being cried down and denounced. My return to Dresden, therefore, is not to be thought of at present on grounds of safety, and the present state of affairs will probably endure for a considerable time. Other considerations, however, press me to come to a decision now as to my future. You know that the way of art which I have chosen is a thorny one. I would not mind the scratches but I can no longer look on indifferently while my whole artistic nature is crushed to powder. My disgust at my

official position, the oppression under which I languished because of it, the paltriness of official undertakings, all combined, years ago, to reduce me to a state of despondency which could only increase with time. The only thing which really kept me alive was my creative artistic work—in any case the very mainspring of my existence. This too was being injured by time and circumstances. My new opera [*Lohengrin*] was finished two years ago, yet I have nowhere received any encouragement to produce it, and for two years I have frittered away my creative powers without object or satisfaction. Thus I at length became a revolutionary—if not in deed, yet in opinion—and cannot recapture any joy in creation. The late catastrophe has partially brought me to myself by making me fully aware of my unhappy and disordered condition and at first I hoped nothing, desired nothing but to get away somewhere quietly with my poor hardly-tried wife and just pass my life away without action, yet also without guilt.—

Arrived in Weimar, however, certain friends I had won through *Tannhäuser* immediately set my feet on another road. Liszt, who has in this matter the concurrence and support of the Grand Duchess, told me at once that I must go to Paris and London—that my place was now there, to work for the future and use my powers for the present, too, away from Germany where—as I have myself felt recently—I—or at least the artist in me—was surely being stultified. Means and influential support of other kinds are offered me to pursue my aims in these places and, to all appearances, quickly to attain them. Now, hard as it seems to me to enter upon an existence away from Germany, I yet feel that intense artistic activity is the only thing that matters in my life. In its present horrible confusion Germany offers no fruitful home for the artist and perhaps may not do so for a long time. It is sad comfort, yet it is comfort, to be able to bear away its art, at least, to the safety of foreign soil. As regards my lost means of livelihood too, only the energetic employment of my talents can give me any prospect of a better future. I have therefore decided to accept the invitations and proffers of my friends here, and after a few preparations shall set out on my journey, probably first to London. The only remaining question is, what is to be my attitude to Dresden? I should already have felt obliged to break with Dresden completely if I did not feel assured that, however fiercely I am being accused at present, the matter is bound to be cleared up as no actually punishable crime can be laid to my charge. I am quite certain that if it is thought necessary to treat me as a criminal, even according to the ideas of the party victorious at the moment, half the inhabitants of Saxony

will have to come under the same strict condemnation. It would therefore be well to try to discover indirectly, on the basis of the true statement I send you here, whether there is sufficient ground for proceeding against me at law. No one but yourself * * can be in a position to adopt the right line of action and take all possible steps to preserve for me the right of return to my Fatherland, perhaps even with retention of my appointment there. If all goes well the form of the compact should run somewhat as follows: that leave of absence be granted me for the ensuing half-year to go to London and Paris and supervise the production of my operas at the theatres there, and to negotiate for the production of a new opera in one of these places. My immediate object is to get my latest opera *Lohengrin* translated into English and first performed in London. Let us suppose that the present storm will pass and that I shall probably soon appear far less deeply compromised politically than is the case at the moment—then why should an artistic institution of Dresden dismiss me finally, pending a time when it may very likely contribute to its honour that one of its members should have won fame in the greatest cities of the world? I at least with my whole heart offer Dresden my hand on it to return later, and I think the latter would not have to regret having accepted that hand. It is clear what a support and comfort that would be to me—only now, *now* let me be free, free in every respect.

God knows if all these proposals may not come far too late—whether already I may not have been foolishly condemned as a traitor, or the like! I have absolutely no news from Dresden and also none for four days of my poor wife, which makes me exceedingly anxious.

Ah, my dear Devrient, don't be angry with me now for the wild, disturbing friendship with myself into which I have dragged you! Do what you can to make it possible for me to be just the artist again—nothing but artist and man—and then you will be better pleased with me.

Send me a letter under cover to Liszt here at Weimar. It will either find me here or be forwarded after me. But soon—soon some news! * * *

150. TO O. L. B. WOLFF, JENA

ZURICH, *29th May*, 1849.

* * * * The journey [1] has refreshed and increased my artistic vitality uncommonly, and I have now completely made up my

[1] On Wagner's flight from Weimar via Jena to Switzerland, cf. *My Life*, pp. 502 *et seq*. On Wagner's parting from his wife, see below, No. 173.

mind as to what I have to do in Paris. I do not believe very much in Fate, yet I know that my recent experiences have set my feet on the road to the accomplishment of the greatest and most significant work which my nature is capable of creating. Only four weeks ago I had no inkling of what I now know to be my highest task. My deep and intimate friendship with Liszt has discovered to me the inward and outward forces by which it is to be accomplished. It is to be our *common* work. You shall soon hear more of it!

Any day now Liszt may receive a package containing scores, etc., from my wife. Let him open it! I ask him to examine the score of *Lohengrin* somewhat leisurely. It is my most recent and my ripest work. I have not showed it to any artist yet and therefore do not know what impression it may make. How eager I am now to hear what Liszt has to say of it! * * *

Now I hope my magician [1] may be able to do something for my poor wife. I am particularly anxious for her to get out of Saxony, above all out of that d——d Dresden. To this end I have thought out a plan for getting a modest yet friendly asylum for her with her family, somewhere in Weimar, perhaps on some grand ducal estate, where she could establish a new home with what has been saved of our household goods, for herself now, and in the future for me too. I hope my friend may succeed in bringing this about! * * * *

151. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

PARIS, *5th June*, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND!

It is to you I turn when I feel I must unburden my heart, and to-day I *need* heartening, that I do not deny! * * *

Your friendship—if you could only understand how much it means to me! I have no other wish than to live near you with my wife for always. It is not Paris nor London, it is you who can best bring out whatever may still be in me, for I can take fire to do my best from you.

* * * Switzerland did me good and I met an old friend of my youth there with whom I was able to speak much of you. It was Alexander Müller, whom you know too, an excellent, likeable fellow and an artist. In Zurich I got hold of and read your article [2] on *Tannhäuser* in the *Journal des Débats*. What have you been about?

[1] Liszt, who made Wagner's escape possible.

[2] This article (*Journal des Débats*, 18 May) appeared in book form in 1851 together with an essay on *Lohengrin* under the title *Lohengrin und Tannhäuser* (German version in Liszt's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Collected Writings), vol. iii. chap. i. Leipzig, 1881).

You set out to describe my opera and have instead produced a real work of art of your own! You have written about the opera just as you conducted it—in a perfectly new and individual way of your own! As I laid the article down my first thoughts were, "This marvellous man can touch and do nothing without pouring out upon it the interior riches of himself. He can never merely reproduce; no activity is possible to him save the purely creative. * * * *"

Shortly after the publication of your article I arrived in Paris. We know well enough that my being here is due to accident. * * * This accident, however, has from the first coloured my standing in Paris very markedly and—that colour strikes our friend Meyerbeer as of the blackest! Oh my dear Liszt, you must come to see this man clearly as he is! But what am I saying? Have you not long realised that natures such as Meyerbeer's are directly opposed to such as yours and mine? Have you not long known that the connection between you and Meyerbeer could only hold through generosity on your part and cunning on his * *? Meyerbeer is small-minded, through and through, and I am sorry to say I meet no one now who has the least inclination to doubt it.

* * * I will work as I can, but I cannot possibly sell my wares in *this* market. The whole trade in art here is so vile, so putrescent and moribund that it simply awaits a courageous reaper able to wield the scythe. Dearest friend, apart from all political speculation, I yet feel constrained to affirm without reservation that no art can grow in anti-revolutionary soil. Probably it would not flourish at once in the fields of Revolution—unless preparation were to be made betimes. * * *

Well, I shall not reach my goal here all at once, but I will prepare myself nevertheless. I cannot compose upon a Scribe- or Dumas-like libretto. * * * I must * * create something new and I can only do so if I make the whole thing myself. I am therefore looking out for a young French poet sympathetic enough to lend himself to my ideas. I shall make my subject myself and he shall then have as much freedom as possible in writing the French verse. * * *

I thank you from my heart for Belloni. He is an excellent, honest and exceedingly energetic man who calls for me every day and leads me on the right road to Parisian fame.

Thus far the more spirited portion of my dispatch—for the rest, this horrible Paris lies like a ton's weight upon me. * * * How alone I am amongst these people! My poor wife—I have still had no news and I grow deathly weak and faint at every remembrance. Send me good news of my wife soon! In spite of courage I am often the most pitiful poltroon! * * * *

152. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, EDWARD AVENARIUS, LEIPZIG

REUIL, 18*th June*, 1849.

* * It is nearly four weeks since I took leave of my wife and not the slightest news of her has yet reached me. * * * My anxiety is inexpressible. * * *

I have fled from Paris out of repugnance to staying there when it can be no use to me. Cholera was raging when I left. Before going, I wrote to Minna and told her of my intention of settling with her in Zurich for a time. I hope she may listen to my entreaty and decide to rejoin me there. All preparations have been made on my part. From various sources Liszt is arranging for a safe yearly income which will in any case secure us a quiet life in a most charming place of residence. From there I shall attend to my affairs in Paris. The profits I expect from there, if I am lucky, I intend to devote wholly to wiping off the debts I left in Dresden. * * * *

153. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

REUIL, 18*th June*, 1849.

* * * * I am utterly useless in Paris at present. My business is to write an opera for Paris—I am unfit for anything else. This cannot be accomplished in the midst of storm. With luck, I should have the versification done in half a year and the performance a year after that. In Paris, without a hearth and—which is the same thing—without peace of heart, I can do no work. I must find a new place where I can feel at home and can decide to remain at home. I have selected Zurich as the place for my purpose and have written to my wife to come and join me there with her youngest sister [1] and the remnants of our household goods. I have a friend there, Alexander Müller, who will give me a hand with setting up house, etc., on as cheap a scale as possible. As soon as I possibly can I shall go there from here. When I have my wife again I shall go gaily to work. Thence I shall send the sketch for my Parisian subject [*Wieland*] to Belloni who has arranged for a French version by Gustave Vaez. He may have the work done by October. I shall then leave my wife and go to Paris for a short time, try by all possible means to get a commission to compose on the subject in question, perhaps also perform something, and then return to Zurich to compose the music. Till then I shall spend my time in getting to work on my latest German poem, *Siegfrieds Tod*. I shall send you the opera finished in six months' time. * * * *

[1] i.e. her daughter Natalie, still known as her sister.

I have only one object and that I will pursue gladly—*work*, which for me means the writing of operas. I am unfit for all else. I can never play a part nor fill a post and I should simply deceive if I attempted to promise that I would devote myself to any other activity.

So find me a small yearly income just sufficient to secure for me a quiet life with my wife in Zurich—since I cannot as yet be near you in Germany. I spoke to you in Weimar of a salary of 300 thalers which I would like to ask of the Grand Duchess for my operas, alterations of the same, and the like. If the Duke of Coburg, or even the Princess of Prussia, were to add something to this I would willingly devote all my future artistic activities to these three benefactors as a kind of recompense and acknowledgment, and they would have the satisfaction of having preserved me in freedom and vigour for my art. I—cannot beg for myself, nor find the proper forms for the necessary contract. *You* can, and you and your intercession will bring it about. * * * *

With the reliance of one who is *utterly* helpless, I now implore you to make it possible to send money to me soon, so that I can leave here, travel to Zurich and live there till I receive the desired maintenance. * * *

Alas! I do not know whether my wife, if she yields to my urgent request and decides to come to Zurich, will be able to raise the necessary funds. * * * *

154. TO THE SAME

REUIL, 19*th June*, 1849.

* * * I have at last got a letter from my wife and it has wakened in me many a pang of conscience. Most of all I am heavy of heart when I think how I asked you [1] to apply to certain royal personages on my behalf for a yearly income. I * * forgot that by my much-talked-of sympathy with the Dresden Rising I stand in a relation to these royal personages which must make them think of me as hostile on principle, and they would perhaps be amazed that I should turn to *them* of all people for help now, finding myself in need after the failure of the Rising. My situation is all the more painful as I cannot possibly resort to the means of clearing myself from these suspicions of my principles without laying myself open to the far worse suspicion of baseness and cowardice. I can, of course, assure you personally that my undisguised sympathy with the movement

[1] Liszt could not fulfil this request but helped out of his own means. See also No. 156.

in Dresden which ended in the outbreak was the result of opinions as far as possible removed from the absurd fanaticism which sees in every prince an object worthy of active hatred. Did I share this marvellous fanaticism I must surely have felt some scruples when I approached the Grand Duchess of Weimar with such *complete* lack of embarrassment. Well, I probably have no need to defend myself to you. You know the bitter source of discontent which sprang from the practice of my beloved art. * * * That I should *now* ever again meddle in a political crisis, particularly after the lesson learned through my sympathy for the Rising, is an impossibility as I need hardly affirm, since it is self-evident to every reasonable man. I rejoice that in all my aspirations I have become entirely the artist again, and *that* I can swear to. * * * *

My wife suffers and takes things bitterly![1] I hope that time may help her. Yesterday I asked you to inquire whether she needed pecuniary aid. I now ask you not to do so—not now.

If you want to do me a kindness, send me some money so that I can get away—anywhere, perhaps after all to Zurich, to my friend Müller. I want peace and quiet to be able to sketch out the scenario for Paris. I don't feel like it at present! What should I do in London now? I am good for nothing—or at most for writing operas—and that I cannot do in London. * * * *

155. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, 9*th July*, 1849.

DEAR FRIEND!

Thanks for your interposition, which has made it possible for me to take refuge for the present in the friendly place whence I write to you to-day. * * *

In close intercourse with a dear friend here, Alexander Müller, your friend too, I hope to get the peace and collectedness necessary to finish my work in preparation for Paris. As to *Rienzi* and the wishes you urge upon us as regards that opera, Belloni * * will inform you more fully. He thinks it impossible to bring it on at the Grand Opera, especially as a beginning. I * * have no heart for a reconstruction of the work, which I have long outgrown and have already had to alter repeatedly on account of its inordinate dimensions. I simply have not the heart for it and would prefer with all my soul soon to make something *new*. * * *

I have arrived at a complete understanding with Gustave Vaez about the externals of our common undertaking. The work

[1] See below, No. 173.

I am about to do here will shortly reveal fully to him—and to you —my inner view of the matter. God grant we may understand each other even here, or at least be able to come to an understanding. It is only from deep conviction involving my whole inner life that I can draw the inspiration and courage necessary for my art, for it is only in this conviction that I can love it. If this conviction were to separate me from my friends—well, I would bid farewell to art too—and turn peasant, perhaps!

From the news I get I cannot help seeing that I am held in high esteem by you over there! I hear that I was even accused the other day of having conspired with someone else to set fire to the old Dresden Opera House. Well, never mind! My good wife is living in the midst of this cesspool of bourgeois goodness and magnanimity. I have given up trying to persuade her to come to me by words, as I feel sure only facts could convince her. * * But one thing troubles me very much, it wounds me to the heart, and that is the charge so often brought against me of ingratitude to the King of Saxony. After all, I am very much a man of feeling and so have found it hard to understand why, in face of this change, I should have suffered on single twinge of conscience for this alleged ingratitude. * * * *

156. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, 19*th July*, 1849.

* * * To-day I received a letter from my wife—unfortunately very much delayed in the post. It is the most moving thing in the world. She wants to come to me, to stay with me always and once again suffer all life's privations with me. As you yourself know, it is useless for me to think of a return to Germany—soon at any rate. Well, we must dwell together abroad! Now, I had not yet told her that the hoped-for assistance from Weimar cannot be forthcoming. She will easily see this herself and will agree; but both she and I are quite destitute of the wherewithal to fulfil her wish of leaving the country and coming to me. Under present difficult conditions she needs money even to get out of Dresden. * * * She has to pack the few things we have saved and have them sent on to me, to leave enough at least for the immediate wants of her poor parents, formerly entirely dependent on me, and make the journey to Zurich with a sister,[1] while *I* must at least be able to offer her a scanty livelihood here for a beginning. At this moment I have nothing in the world to offer her. I am still living solely on the remainder of the money which I had from you through Belloni before my departure

[1] See No. 153, note 1.

from Paris. But, my dear friend, I will see to it that I am not wholly a burden upon you. * * * Once more I have made urgent inquiries for paying employment. * * *

You will see how quickly I shall get through the work. In the course of next month my preparatory work for Paris, the pamphlet [1] *and* two sketches of subjects [2] besides, will be finished and in train. Where *I* cannot accommodate myself to you I shall win *you* to me —that I promise you—so that we may go hand in hand and never have to part company. I will obey you—only give me my poor wife, do something so that she will be able to come to me happily and with some confidence soon—soon—and oh, I am sorry to say, in the language of this sweet nineteenth century, that means send her as much money as you possibly can! Yes, I am like that—I can beg—I could steal now to make my wife happy, if only for a little while. * * *

157. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *4th August*, 1849.

* * I send you herewith my just completed latest work, *Art and Revolution*. It is a new digest of the original text which I sent last week to Paris to be translated for the literary columns of the *National*. I don't know whether you will find it sympathetic, but I am certain that you and I are essentially at one. I hope you will find none of the political commonplaces, socialistic gibberish, nor personal animosities in it, against which you warned me. * * *

Please have the manuscript and accompanying letter addressed and sent off to the publisher, Otto Wigand in Leipzig. My inferior journalistic capacities may perhaps help a little to keep me.

Since my last letter, which I sent off at the same time as my frantic petition to you, I have heard no news of my wife and am consequently suffering tortures. * * * *

158. TO THEODORE UHLIG, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *9th August*, 1849.

* * * * My friend Liszt is devilish keen that I should write an opera for Paris. I have been there, too, and have agreed with a poet of repute to give him a full plan for an operatic subject which he is to carry out in French, undertaking also to get me a commission

[1] *Art and Revolution* (see No. 158).
[2] *Wieland the Smith* and *Achilles*; see Nos. 158 and 167.

for its composition from the Grand Opera. * * * I have now, besides *Siegfried*, two tragic [1] and two comic [2] operatic plots in my head, none of them, however, suitable for a French production. I have also a fifth as to which I am indifferent in what tongue it sees daylight—*Jesus of Nazareth*. I am thinking of offering this subject to the Frenchman and hope therewith to be rid of the whole matter, for I should like to see the horror that this poem will arouse in my associate.[3] * * * You can best estimate the joy with which again I contemplate the art-business of Paris by reading my big article in the *National*, *Art and Revolution*, which I think is to be published also as a German brochure by Wigand of Leipzig.[4] I am living here now, supported in communal-wise by Liszt, merrily and, as regards better nature, I may almost say happily. My one great anxiety was for my poor wife and I am now expecting her to be with me very shortly. To my great surprise I found myself famous here, and this through the pianoforte arrangements of all my operas. * * * At the beginning of winter I shall go to Paris again to do some conducting and to settle my operatic affairs. But I now intend to make my real home here. * * * As you know, I felt the impending Dresden catastrophe long beforehand in my very bones, but I had no inkling of the hurricane which was actually to drive my barque away from the place. You are probably equally aware that no amnesty or restitution in the world could persuade me again to be that which I was, to my sorrow, in Dresden. * * * Have you perchance any reliable news as to the progress of the inquiries? I am very concerned for the fates of Heubner, Röckel and Bakunin. *These* people ought certainly not to be imprisoned! * * * Yesterday I at last got my scores. I went through *Lohengrin* a little on the piano and I simply cannot tell you what an amazingly affecting impression this work of my own made upon me! * * * You have already undertaken at my request to prepare as occasion offers a pianoforte arrangement of this opera. I am sure it would be a disappointment to you and even more to me if anything were to impede this work, so if you still have a mind to it and would like to enter into an agreement with me (always upon the understanding that you are to be indemnified for your trouble by the future publisher of the opera), I would ask you to apply for the score which I sold to the Dresden Theatre, so that you can begin upon the pianoforte arrangement. * * * *

[1] *Wieland the Smith* and *Achilles*.

[2] *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* and *Young Siegfried*; see No. 161.

[3] Gustave Vaez; see No. 155.

[4] It was published there, but the *National* rejected the article as totally unsuitable for Paris; see Nos. 160 and 167.

159. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *11th August*, 1849.

* * * It is being separated which is much the saddest part of the matter, for me at least, because it sets me in hourly *uncertainty* about you and your health. * * *

* * * Liszt's last letter has proved to me how active he is on my behalf and in it he also notifies me that he has sent 100 thalers to you. He wrote that this money was from an admirer of my *Tannhäuser*, for the pleasure this work had given him, but who wished to remain anonymous. At the same time he asked me to make a supplementary dedication of the pianoforte arrangement of *Tannhäuser* to the Heir-apparent to the Grand Duchy of Weimar, which I did at once, adding a few verses which will produce the right effect, yet without compromising my free-thinking opinions in any way.[1] There is no doubt that Liszt will soon get together the modest yearly income I want for my works.

* * * Bring Natalie with you, of course! I have thought that over, too. What is all this about a post for her? She ought to come to be with you and help you in every way so that—as you very rightly remark—you may have someone about you if I have to go travelling. In short, she is indispensable to you and costs next to nothing, too. Would our worry about her be any the less if she stayed behind? If she wants to earn anything extra she can do it better here than in Dresden, for work here is *better paid*. Well, then, anyhow, bring her with you!

As to our stay in Switzerland, you have nothing to worry about! The refugees are nothing to me * * *—in fact I don't count as a refugee, for I have my full Swiss passport perfectly in order and a permit for a year's residence. * * * *

160. TO THEODORE UHLIG, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *16th September*, 1849.

BEST OF FRIENDS AND ROYAL CHAMBER-MUSICIAN STILL ACTUALLY *de facto*! * * * *

God knows how it is, but I cannot be really unhappy here. Particularly now that my wife is with me and that I need have no care for my livelihood for the next few months, I am continually as full of high spirits and as much at my ease as a dog that has run off with the whip. The only thing is that I have not lately been able

[1] The letter to Karl Alexander with the request to be allowed to dedicate *Tannhäuser* to him (7 August) was published in *Deutsche Rundschau*, January 1925, p. 3.

to get at my work again. We have but just succeeded in procuring a small abode for next week and there I shall be able to have a work-room. Hitherto I have only been able to sit down to write in a common-room and you must attribute it to this circumstance that I have dutifully fulfilled your request and finished my Wibelung essay [*The Wibelungs. World History from the Saga*] for publication. * * *

I now send you this little paper and ask you to have it sent with the accompanying letter to Wigand [1] the publisher of Leipzig. * * * Wigand is already publishing a brochure of mine, *Art and Revolution*, the French fortunes of which, in the *National*, I know nothing of [2] up to date. Get this little essay as soon as it appears. * * As soon as I get to work again I shall follow it with a more substantial work, *The Work of Art of the Future*, concluding later still with a third paper, *The Artist of the Future*.[3] * * *

It is, however, absolutely necessary for me to do this work and send it out into the world before I proceed to my purely artistic creations. * * *

If things go as I greatly wish, after the finishing of these tasks I shall compose the music for my *Siegfried*, which I long to do from the very depths of my heart. I wish I could honourably evade the Parisian operatic schemes imposed upon me. It was really only Liszt who let me in for the trouble. This modern cosmopolitan, who, for the rest, has his good qualities, loves me in a way which makes him want to prepare a gigantic, universal, Parisian success for me. Having of necessity to think of earning, I did not at once dismiss the idea. I let them have their way with me and am now stuck in an absurd dilemma, * * having to choose between actual friendly offers from Paris and my own inner disinclination. * * *

* * * I want to be happy, and a man is only happy when he is *free*, and a man is only free who is what he *can* be and therefore *must* be. But he who * * follows not the inner but the outer necessity is subject to coercion, is unfree, a slave, unblest and unhappy. * * * Well then, I don't believe in this Paris opera of mine! But my wife must know nothing of this yet. * * * *

Tell Hiebendahl * * particularly from me that * * I shall assume you have shown him this present letter. I am still superhumanly indebted to him for having been so considerately and nobly silent about a loan, the whole of which I spent on the publication of my operas and which must have seemed to him, with his modest means, far from easily spared. * * * *

[1] Wigand published *The Wibelungs* in 1850; see No. 166.
[2] See No. 158, note 4.
[3] This was not written.

161. TO FRANZ LISZT, STAYING AT EILSEN, NEAR BÜCKEBURG

ZURICH, *14th October*, 1849.

* * * We are, as far as possible, domestically settled here and after a long interval full of torment and unrest I am once more able to set to work upon my great artistic schemes for the future.

Nothing, after my reunion with my much-tried wife, could give me greater joy than to hear of your creative artistic activities. Your musical pieces composed for the centenary celebrations of Goethe's birth have come to my knowledge in a pianoforte arrangement, and I have carefully studied them.[1] * * * My liveliest feeling after I had got to know these pieces was, however, the wish soon to see you write an opera, or finish the one already begun. The aphoristic nature of the task imposed on you by these Goethe celebrations has necessarily impressed itself involuntarily upon the work of art and prevented it from achieving perfect spontaneity of feeling. I think of the power of musical creation as of a bell which, however great it is, does not give forth its full tone till the necessary force has set it in full swing. This power is an inward one, and where it does not exist inwardly it does not exist at all. * * * *

* * * You have opened Paris to me and truly I will not turn my back on it, but as to my choosing and planning something for the place, I really cannot do it at a moment's notice. I must be someone else there, and yet I must necessarily remain the same. My numerous schemes were all adapted for performance under my own sole direction and in the German language. Certain things (such as *Jesus of Nazareth*) which I would in case of need be ready to use for Paris, turn out in many respects impossible on closer inspection from the practical point of view, so that I really must have time and leisure here to call up ideas such as I can in any case only expect to find in somewhat foreign regions of my nature. Besides, the text of my *Siegfried* now lies before me. I have not composed a note for two years, and now my whole being as an artist urges me to compose music for it. * * *

* * * How and whence am I to get the means of livelihood? Is my finished work *Lohengrin* worth nothing? Is the opera which I am so insistently impelled to finish now, worth nothing? I suppose they must seem luxuries to the present times and their public! * * *

* * I have heard nothing at all of Heinrich Brockhaus (of whom you write), and at heart am glad of it. Dear Liszt, let us leave the

[1] *Festalbum zu Goethes* 100 *Geburtstag* (Leipzig, 1849) (Commemorative Album on the Hundredth Anniversary of Goethe's Birth), containing "A Goethe Festival March"; "Light, more Light!" and "Weimar's Dead," for a male chorus; a solo quartet, "On all the Hill-tops"; Angel chorus from *Faust*.

shopkeepers alone—once for all! They are human beings and lovers of art, of course—but only in so far as "*business*" permits!

Now what do you think—help me, advise me! * * * *

162. TO KARL RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, 21*st November*, 1849.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND!

* * * * You are probably more intimate with Feuerbach now. You ought really first to have read his paper on *Death and Immortality*. However, you will soon find the right thing. It is a bad business that one has to read books in order to become a natural man!

But much of the evil of this is in the books themselves. A writer must write God knows how much to express the simplest truth and in so doing often becomes a writer instead of a man. But Feuerbach emerges as a man when all is said and done, and that is why he is so important, particularly in relation to absolute philosophy which tends to dissolve the man in the philosopher.

I have never seen the natural healthy process work itself out so clearly and consciously as in Feuerbach and I confess I am greatly indebted to him. * * * *

163. TO HIS SISTER, CLARA WOLFRAM, CHEMNITZ

ZURICH, 1*st December*, 1849.

* * * * I am living a completely retired life, as has always been my custom, and only meet a few Zurichers [1]—men of good standing —who, in spite of the newness of our acquaintance, have shown themselves better and more actively sympathetic friends than all the Dresden amateurs who used to praise my works. Those rumours which appear to worry you about the extent of my participation in the Dresden Rising are not much better than those about my doings in Zurich. For Minna's sake I have now entered an application in Dresden to have the term "for common criminality" withdrawn from the warrant against me. I almost regret it, for at bottom I would rather bear this added burden of infamy heaped on me by the Dresden courts, my contempt for the whole rabble of them is so great. * * * But it is quite possible it will be refused me. * * *

* * * The only thing * * that can depress me is just this worry about my wife, without whom I would not wish to live. The fact that she has drawn strength from the consciousness that she is indis-

[1] See below, No. 167.

pensable to me, to share my troubles with me, despite her inner disapproval of me, has gained her a very high place in my heart, and it is my love for her which actually still binds me to a world from which, guided by my own utter disgust for it, I should like to turn aside for ever. I hope my efforts may succeed in making our life as bearable as possible. Meanwhile Minna is bearing her lot bravely and—as always—with uncommon energy. She is also beginning to get a circle of women friends. * * * *

164. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *5th December*, 1849.

* * * I am now quite clear about the actual problem I have to solve for Paris. The solution is—to remain true to myself * * and you will allow I am right to determine that it is * * as such * * that I must make myself intelligible to the French. * * * * Good! With this in mind, a new idea for a subject has just occurred to me which I will work out at once and impart to Gustave Vaez. It is highly original, moving and suitable in *all* circumstances [*Wieland the Smith*]. * * *

* * * I cannot let my *Lohengrin* lie and rot like this. I have latterly accustomed myself to the notion of giving it to the world first in a foreign tongue and have taken up your former idea of having it translated into English to make possible a first performance in London. I am not afraid that this opera will be misunderstood by the English and I would be ready to agree to a slight alteration. * * * *

* * * The local Concert Society has approached me to rehearse their orchestra (which is very feeble) in a Beethoven symphony and in a composition of my own, in return for which they would take the trouble of arranging a benefit concert for me. A great delay, however, has been caused by my demanding an increase in the strings (which was absolutely necessary and on which I was bound to insist unconditionally for the honour of the thing), so that probably the concert, which is to be in a sense the *captatio benevolentiae* for my benefit concert, will not take place before the beginning of January. * * * *

* * * I shall certainly consider the subject out of Byron.[1] I don't know it at all and have not yet found time to study it—but I think you will forgive me for it. * * * *

[1] Wagner did not make an oratorio libretto from Byron's "Heaven and Earth" for Liszt, who likewise abandoned the subject.

165. TO THEODORE UHLIG, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *27th December*, 1849.

* * * The news of Frau Ritter [1] has moved and touched me uncommonly, and in more than one sense, too! My art has always been well received in women's hearts and the reason probably is that, in spite of the prevailing vulgarity, women still find it difficult to harden their souls as thoroughly as does our world of male citizens, who have achieved this hardness to perfection. Women are the music of life. They accept a thing more frankly, more implicitly, and add beauty to it by their sympathy. While I was still awaiting news from Bordeaux I was surprised by a sum of money sent from Dresden through Herr Paetz. I immediately wrote back to him expressing as well as I could the feelings called up in me by this token of love and sympathy from someone I scarcely knew. If such experiences make any man feel good, exalted and joyful, they have an absolutely beatifying effect on me. I have never found the consciousness of freedom so pleasant as now and am well assured of the fact that only loving association with others gives freedom. If the help of Frau Laussot should save me from the need of earning for a few years, these years will be the most decisive of my life, especially of my artistic career, for I can now face even Paris calmly and worthily, whereas formerly the fear of being driven to concessions by my practical wants completely spoiled in advance every step I took in the Paris business. * * *

Well then, on January 16th, 1850, I go to Paris. A few overtures of mine are already in rehearsal there and I shall take my finished opera plan for *Wieland the Smith*. First I shall dispute the five-act opera form, and then the rule that there must be a special ballet in every grand opera. If I succeed in inspiring Gustave Vaez with enthusiasm, getting him to understand my views and making him want to carry the thing through with me, well and good, but if not, I shall go on looking till I find the right poet. * * *

Don't make so much of my last work [*The Work of Art of the Future*], but I should be a fool to attempt to deny that I am very pleased it has made a hit with you. * * * I cannot but laugh when I think how determined I was after that composition never again to write in like vein. Now the impulse wells up in me on every hand to write again. To be quite fair, we must admit that it is the only sensible and useful thing to do at present. The Work of Art [2] cannot

[1] Frau Ritter, having heard of Wagner's need through Ferdinand Heine, sent him 500 thalers and proposed to support him regularly together with her friend Jessie Laussot of Bordeaux.

[2] "Kunstwerk" = Art-work. (TRANS.)

be created now, it can only be prepared for, and that by revolution, by the destruction and overthrow of all the things which deserve destruction and overthrow. That is our work and men other than we will be the first true creative artists. It is only in this light that I regard my approaching activities in Paris. Any work, even, which I write for Paris and produce there, can be only an incident in the revolution, a sign affirming destruction. Destruction alone is now necessary—construction at present can only be arbitrary. I have still an immense deal to say to those before whom I have laid my *Work of Art*[1] *of the Future.* * * * *

* * * I have much to write shortly to Karl Ritter. Test and see, then, if he has anything like a good voice! Were I his age now, were I what he is and had I as much voice as I had at one time—I would certainly become a performer. As performer, poet and composer in one I would have tried—even in a time of complete calm—to revolutionise the whole drama. For who has the practical power to do it except the performer? Just think, dear friend, if Tichatschek had all my qualifications as well, or if I had his voice, what would the condition of the theatre be to-day? Our cursed abstract writing and composing is the devil and all—we will, and can not! * * * *

166. TO THE SAME

PARIS, *8th February,* 1850.

* * * * I have promised[2] an article on *Art and Climate* for the March number of the *Deutsche Monatschrift*[3] (Stuttgart). A good friend on the *Deutsche Allgemeine* [*Zeitung*][4] has decided me to present the worthlessness, cowardliness and bad taste of that pretext of "climate" in all its nothingness. In any case I have decided to issue *Papers on Art and Life*[5] entirely on my own, perhaps bi-monthly. If only the *Work of Art of the Future* attracts some attention I hope I may persuade Wigand to accept my undertaking. * * *

I have made *one* mistake with the *Wibelungs,* not on account of the title, but by publishing it as a brochure. It belongs to a monthly review. Beg Wigand's pardon for me on that account and give him my kind regards.

I have not written to the King and yet it seems to me there is a basis of truth in the rumour. Early in June last year in Paris

[1] "Kunstwerk" = Art-work. (TRANS.)
[2] Published vol. ii., 1850 (*Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. iii.).
[3] *German Monthly Magazine.* (TRANS.)
[4] *Pan-German Newspaper.* (TRANS.)
[5] This plan was never carried out.

THEODORE UHLIG

From a signed portrait-medallion by Gustav Kietz.
In the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig

Semper told me that Heubner was sentenced to death and that the execution would soon be carried out. My heart seemed to turn in my breast. From that country I wrote at once to Frau von Lüttichau (naturally without saying a word about myself) saying she ought to go to the King and admonish him before the execution of the sentence (if it had really been pronounced). I praised Heubner and declared that not only would the King have done better to call him into the Ministry, as he had formerly proposed to do, but that he could now do nothing better than get to know Heubner and make a friend of him. Naturally Frau von Lüttichau did nothing as the whole thing was only a rumour, but it is possible that since the real sentence she has now produced *my* letter. This may be the basis of what has come to your ears. * * *

167. TO THE SAME

[PARIS, *24th February*, 1850.]

* * * * My complaint about my sense of loneliness * * was in no way aimed at Zurich and my friends there. * * * They were one and all so fully agreed to indulge me according to my nature, to accept me and all my doings, as I am and as I do, that everything connected with the wholesome expression of my friends' simple Swiss outlook contributed not a little to make me forget my loneliness with them, particularly when I turned my eyes away from the great world. So deeply do I feel the need of putting this right with you that I must tell you briefly who these friends are. My two closest friends, those in particular whose uncommonly ready and delicately proffered support sustained my family for three months, are Wilhelm Baumgartner, pianoforte teacher, a fine, open-minded, cheerful, uncommonly good-natured man, very eager to learn, and Jacob Sulzer, clerk to the canton and first in importance after the mayor, a man of a philosophical, cultured understanding, a noble, convinced, far-seeing radical. Both are still in the twenties. In the second degree come Spyri, a young advocate, open-hearted, very susceptible, enthusiastic and devoted, and Hagenbuch, second State official of the canton, a strong handsome young man, with a wide-awake brain, a sound heart and a vital culture; these are also in the twenties. My old friend, Alexander Müller of Erfurt, settled eighteen years in Zurich as a teacher of music, is an excellent musician and a reliable and devoted friend to me. Unfortunately too much giving of lessons and nerve-racking ill-health have made him somewhat inaccessible to modern ideas. Besides these nearer friends I have a number of more distant but very pleasant acquain-

tances. I have often indulged, almost to my detriment, in the pleasure and stimulus of their society.

The people are mighty busy here in Paris, but chiefly with their own affairs—and the Jew dealers'! I know no artists, and even Berlioz, though I would willingly forgive him his errors of taste, cannot attract me, since he is Meyerbeer's bondsman. The one man who interests me here is Liszt's secretary, Belloni, who has been put at my service to do business and intrigue for me. He, however, has not been in Paris until to-day. * * *

Meanwhile, I have been to see *The Prophet* for the first time in my life. * * * In the last act I am sorry to say I was distracted by a banker who was holding an uncommonly loud conversation in his box. Apart from this, I was convinced at this 47th performance of the opera of its having won undeniably keen and lasting appreciation from the public of the Paris Grand Opera. The house is always filled to overflowing and the applause more enthusiastic than I have ever known here.

I am glad to be able to tell you that I have got on the track of the cause of this illness of mine. It was in great part a nervous disease, or at least it was nervous trouble which produced the constitutional disturbance resulting in the recent threatening physical manifestations. A little while ago I wrote a long letter [1] to Franz Liszt * * explaining very thoroughly my reasoned decision not upon any consideration to write an opera for Paris, the most I am willing to do being to take a finished work, one to which I have become indifferent, *Lohengrin*, and cast it into the arena at the Grand Opera House of Paris to be meddled with and pulled to pieces. As I am not so childish as to suppose this offering would be acceptable and as it is, furthermore, impossible for me to contribute a single stroke of the pen towards the business of offering it, I think I may take it that my dear friends Heine and Fischer will have to forgo the pleasure of seeing a Wagnerian Knight of the Swan swim over the Rhine. * * *

It may perhaps be possible to get my *Work of Art of the Future* translated into French for Paris. It would be as well for me to be up and away out of France before its appearance, as afterwards I should certainly be forcibly ejected. I have also had to abandon my plan of working not only for the Paris of the present but also for the Paris of the future. Apart from the misfortune of my having purely German, not French, instincts, my article would only be accepted in the socialist papers. After the appearance of the first number I could * * count on, at most, only twenty-four hours' longer residence in Paris.

[1] Not published hitherto. Is it extant?

* * * In the Alps I will write you a perfect German *Wieland*,[1] and the People will some day understand it. I will put down *Siegfried* and *Achilleus* in black and white for a happier posterity—the singer is not yet born for these parts. * * * *

168. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, ZURICH

PARIS, *2nd March*, 1850.

* * * No one could possibly act more kindly, more nobly, more delicately than our friend Mme. Laussot! I should have thought, dear wife, that it would have really uplifted you to see what a deep impression your husband's work can make on wholesome, unperverted, noble hearts; to see that he is able to influence them to make such sacrifices because of their warm sympathy! Can you find it in your heart to despise such a success of my art—*for that alone* has brought this about—or even to rate it lower than the so-called "brilliant" successes attained to-day by speculation and trickery from the stupid, slovenly, heartless majority of the great theatre-going public? You see now the real nature of these cowardly, slack people, who once seemed well enough pleased with me, and how despicably they have behaved towards me. Are we to despise these people and yet think only of money? Good, then here is money, as much as we need to live in peace and comfort, money, too, not juggled out of the pockets of the stingy crowd, but offered to me in the most delicate fashion by a noble heart, out of joy in my works, just as I make them out of my true innermost nature! What more do you want? * * * *

169. TO THE SAME

PARIS, *13th March*, 1850.

* * * Will you be cross with me if I tell you I have suddenly decided at last to accept the very pressing and cordial invitations of my friends in Bordeaux—they have even sent me my travelling expenses—and that I accordingly set out to-morrow morning for Bordeaux? You see, I am utterly useless here now and am simply wearing myself out in worry and fruitless endeavours. * * *

* * * Frau Laussot is doing all she is doing for me, just so that I need do *nothing* against my nature and inmost inclination, to save me from quite useless and fruitless annoyance here. And, just think, she and Frau Ritter *quite alone* offer us a yearly income—no one else is to have any claim made upon them. * * * *

[1] But see end of No. 178.

170. TO THE SAME

BORDEAUX, *17th March*, 1850.

* * * It seems like Heaven, here in Bordeaux where I arrived last Saturday, when I think of Paris! You can have no conception of the kindness and devotion of this family [Laussot]! It consists of the young married couple and the wife's mother, an Englishwoman who, however, like the husband, * * speaks German as well as we do. There is besides a whole colony of Germans here, rich families all, and they all honour me very highly. What else am I to say to you but that I am very happy to have got to know in this way these kind people, whose one desire and object is to make myself and my good, hardly tried and faithful wife as happy as they possibly can? It is a rare and unheard-of piece of good fortune which has befallen me. The young husband, an amiable and frank young man, was quite inexpressibly glad to see me come. My works are known here down to the last note and everyone knows how the matter stands, and are proud of being able to help me so much. * * * In spite of this excellent family, however, I wouldn't exchange Switzerland for Bordeaux at any price and am thoroughly homesick for Switzerland. * * * *

171. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

BORDEAUX, *22nd March*, 1850.

* * * Here at last I am permitted to behold with my very eyes what hitherto I have only been able to grope after in the form of vague, though always pleasing imaginary sensations. I now clearly perceive one link in the chain which holds me as by a lovely charm, and from this one link I may, to my unutterable bliss, judge the quality of all the other links in that chain. I have at last come to know our friend Jessie Laussot and the knowledge has awakened in me an irrepressible longing to have the joy of knowing equally clearly and perfectly you and all who belong to her.

My heart rejoices in you, and yet you and yours are still only a picture to me and it is a real torment to me that the colours of this picture change and melt indistinctly one into another. I can hold nothing fast except the entrancing consciousness of being dear to you. Blessed as this feeling is, it is yet not free from pain, for the gulf of separation yawns between us. It is impossible that you should love only the artist in me, just as it is impossible for me to honour only my benefactor in you. There is a bond between us which holds only because we love each other as *persons*. We must see each other

face to face, take each other by the hand, dwell together, not simply rejoice in each other at large, but have a share in every incident of each other's lives, sad and joyful, tearful and merry—as life must be. * * * *

Come to me in glorious Switzerland! * * * *

172. TO THEODORE UHLIG, DRESDEN

BORDEAUX, *26th March*, 1850.

* * * * Do you really think the Saxon Ministry could commit the villainy of clearing me to please the Court while allowing poor devils such as Herz to be condemned to 15 years in prison? I cannot conceive such wickedness, but neither can I conceive that the Court and Lüttichau could be so stupid as to think seriously of recalling me to my former post. If, however, this should be the case, I would meet these r——s in spirited fashion by refusing to accept either my acquittal or my recall, which would at least deprive their baseness and stupidity of any very striking success in the eyes of the malicious world. * * * *

173. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, ZURICH

PARIS, *17th April*, 1850.

DEAR MINNA!

So I still call you, despite the signature of the last letter [1] I had from you, making it a condition I should call you "You" [2] for the present. "Dear Minna!" So I call you as I approach you to-day in this heavy hour, so I used to call you once, before this worst and most irremediable discord of the spirit had come between us, and so—if you will grant it me—you shall always live in my remembrance!—

Your letters to Bordeaux have roughly awakened me from a beautiful, a last illusion about ourselves. I believed I had won you at last, I fondly imagined I had seen you soften before the might of true love—and then, with terrible anguish, realised more than ever the absolute certainty that we belong to each other no more. After that I could bear it no longer. I could speak to no one—I wanted to get away quickly—to *you*, left my friends in haste and hurried to Paris, meaning to go on from there with all speed to Zurich. Well, I have been here again for a fortnight. My old nerve trouble has overtaken me again, it lies upon me like an incubus—I must shake it off,—I *must*, for my own sake—and for thine. Listen to

[1] Wagner's wife could not understand why he refused to win money and fame in Paris; see No. 178.

[2] The intimate style of address in German, as from husband to wife, etc., is "thou" and "thee."

me! Our essential unlikeness of nature has given pain, sometimes slight, sometimes intense, to me—and especially to you,—all the time we have known each other. It is not *I* who need to remind you of the numberless scenes between us from the very first, for they probably live in your memory more vividly even than they do in mine. What bound me nevertheless so irresistibly to you at those times was love; a love that looked beyond all differences, a love which you, however, did not share,[1] at least not in the degree in which it dominated me. You really only submitted perforce to my urgent desire for union. Perhaps you felt for me all that you were capable of feeling at all, but as regards that essential thing by the help of which every trouble is smilingly faced, love unqualified, the love whereby we love another for what he really is and *as* he is, *that* love you could not feel, for you did not understand me even then and were always imagining me to be something other than I really am. Ever since our reunion after that first breach in our married life, it has really been only duty which has governed your relation to me. * * *

After I got the appointment in Dresden your disapproval of me increased just at the time and just in the degree that I—forgetful of personal advantage—in the interests of my art and of my artistic and human independence, found myself no longer able to submit to the wretched conditions of management of that institution for art and revolted against it. Anyone who had watched me and tried to understand me at that critical period of my life would have to admit that all that I did was done as the inevitable and righteous consequence of my artistic nature, to which, in face of all kinds of personal risks, I remained consistently true. The fact that I was at length brought to revolt, not only as an artist but as a man too, against all this tyranny which none could feel more acutely than I with my passionate nature, should be very explicable * * to anyone who observed me closely. * * Such an one would be bound to acknowledge that I did not act out of caprice or vanity, for he would have seen how I *suffered* under it all. Consequently he would have consoled and encouraged me, and my wife might have done this had she taken the trouble to understand me—to do which she needed no book-learning, but simply *love*! * * *

Enough! The fateful hour struck. I was compelled to flee, leaving all behind me. I had but one wish before leaving Germany altogether —to see my wife once more! I was indifferent to everything else, I would have let myself be captured, but without this solace I would not go. At last my wife gave way to my supplications, not to bring

[1] But see Nos. 156, 163, and 180.

me that solace, not to receive consolation herself in my embrace once more, but simply to humour an obstinate person and induce him to go away—to save himself, to be sure. Never can I forget the night when I was awakened in my place of hiding to receive my wife. Cold and reproachful she stood before me and said, "Well, I am come, as you were so determined on it. Now perhaps you will be satisfied! Start on your journey now, I shall go back to-night in any case!" At Jena at last I did succeed in winning a warm and loving farewell from you. That parting comforted me in exile. I had only one idea in my head—a speedy and instant reunion. Ardently, with all my heart, I besought you for this in my letters. Then finally in the country near Paris I received that deplorable letter which froze me to ice with its lovelessness and heartlessness. You told me you would not come to me till I could *earn* money to support you abroad, and you said clearly that you no longer felt any love for me. You will remember what has happened since then. You wrote to me again announcing your decision to join me at Zurich. I might hope again! Yes, I cherished a hope that I might be able to win you wholly to me at last, to convince you of my opinions, to draw you closer to me. I was assiduous to smooth away practical difficulties. You came—how happy I was! And yet, how unhappy! For you had not come to *me*, to share joy and sorrow with me as I was, but to *a Wagner* who, you believed, *was about to compose an opera for Paris*! You were ashamed to say in Dresden that you were going to join me in Switzerland. Instead you gave out you were going to Paris and that your husband had (as apparently you believed yourself) a signed contract already in his pocket. Oh, the gulf of misunderstanding between us two was bound to be revealed more and more day by day! All my views and thoughts shocked you, you loathed my writings, though I tried to make it clear to you that they were more necessary to me now than a lot of useless opera writing. You defended all the people with whom I was *not* like-minded, you condemned all like-minded with me. * * * In short, at last I felt *infinitely lonely* beside you, for I saw it was impossible to win you to me. * * * *

Your letter has now wrecked everything. There you stand before me—irreconcilable * * * What can *my* love be now? Only the wish to repay you for your youth wasted on me, for the misery you suffered with me, to make you *happy*. Can I hope to attain this now by *living with you*? Impossible! [1]

[1] The close has been withheld from publication. According to Dinger in his *Wagners geistige Entwickelung* (Spiritual Development), vol. i., p. 267 (Leipzig, 1892), it should run: "You will not see me again. I am going to the East with Jessie Laussot." This, however, is contradicted by No. 178.

174. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

PARIS, *21st April*, 1850.

Decisive events have just been happening in my life; the last fetters which bound me to a world in which I must speedily have gone under, not only spiritually but physically, have fallen away. I have lost my health, my nerves are shattered through the ceaseless constraint imposed on me by my immediate environment. Just for the present now I shall live only for my recovery. I am provided for, and you shall hear from me from time to time.

My dear fellow, I have just been looking through the score of my *Lohengrin* a little; otherwise I never read my own work. A great longing has flamed up in me to have this work performed.[1] I urge this plea upon you. Get my *Lohengrin* produced! *You are the only one* whom I would ask to do this. I would entrust the creation of this opera to none but you. Produce it where you will, it is all the same to me even if it is only in Weimar. I am certain you will contrive all possible and necessary accessories and people will refuse you nothing. Produce *Lohengrin* and let it be *your*[2] work to bring it to birth. * * * *

175. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, ZURICH

[GENEVA], *Saturday, 4th May*, 1850.

DEAR MINNA!

I cannot help writing to you once again before going so far away from you. I do not know, and indeed would not wish to know, how you have taken the news which I sent you in my last letter of the decisive step I contemplate. Since you have so often accustomed yourself to the thought of living apart from me and recovering your independence I suppose, and hope too, that though you may perhaps be surprised, you will not be horrified at my decision. I for my part live in the hope that in parting, our mutual remembrance of our past life together will grow pleasanter and perhaps even more consolatory than it could do if we continued together the joyless and galling existence which the continual friction of our different and mutually opposed natures might have inflicted upon us.

The news I have to tell you to-day, however, gave me a special reason for writing to you once more, since I feel it may soften for you any possible bitterness in our parting. I am upon the point of setting out for Marseilles,[3] whence I shall go at once by an English

[1] See No. 167. [2] See No. 179.

[3] This plan for a journey in the East was never carried out; see No. 179.

ship to Malta and thence on to Greece and Asia Minor. I have always felt * * the need of getting away from a mere life of books and ideas, so unprofitable for me, to see something of the world again. The modern world is closed against me for the present, for I detest it and want to have no more to do with it nor with what is nowadays called "art" there. Germany can afford me no stimulus till all the conditions of life there are radically altered. * * * So now is the time to satisfy my longing for far travel, to withdraw completely for a time from our present-day conditions and to refresh myself physically and spiritually by change of scene and sound and travel in other climes. During this recent critical time I conceived a plan of going to Greece and the East and am now so fortunate as to have the means to carry it out placed at my disposal from London. I have in fact found a new patron in London, one of the most eminent English lawyers [1] who knows my work and is affording me his support upon a certain condition, namely the possession of the original manuscript of everything I may yet write. * * * *

Let us then now remain apart! If we keep our health, if times and conditions change, we may surely hope to see each other again. But for the present separation will do us good!

You will soon receive from London what you need to live upon. * * * *

176. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

GENEVA, 11*th May, evening* [1850].

MY DEAR, DEAR LADY!

* * * I have but just come to know Karl and now I have had to leave him for a little. I must summon up the failing powers of my sick body to go with all speed to Bordeaux, not to see Jessie but Eugène [Laussot]. Think of me as a dying man, for either a speedy death awaits me—or a new life. My strength is spent. Only the miracle of love can give me back to life.

I turn to you with all the fervour of my soul in my extreme need! If it is impossible for you, dear lady, to make the journey to Switzerland forthwith and await my return from Bordeaux with your son at Villeneuve on Lake Geneva, then I beg you to send our dear Emilie there! She will do me this great office of love—bring a last greeting to a dying man or share in the holy joy of one new born. Whether it be the one or the other I feel an irrepressible longing for some woman creature [2] who is dear to me. * * * *

[1] Probably Wagner invented this to pacify Minna.
[2] Frau Ritter came with her daughter; see the next letter.

177. TO THE SAME

ZERMATT, *9th June*, 1850.

DEAR MOTHER!

Here am I alone again and happiness has flown away like a dream! Hope remains to me—but I am hardly young enough now to live on hope!

God knows if I can bear it! I can be composed and resigned, but for whose sake? For the sake of my pride! Yet this pride is all I have—my last refuge in a loveless life. * * * I need not pose before you, though I can say to you openly, I feel very unhappy! Thoughts, wishes, hopes, ah! what are you all compared to reality! I have wrenched myself free of the old tormenting life, but the new life still hovers formless before me. So I am neither dead nor living, the martyr of memory, reluctant to depend on a hope whose fulfilment I cannot and may not actively further, a victim of the torments of imagination, at the mercy of events which I scarcely dare look upon, which I am utterly powerless *myself* to direct! Only one thing could restore me fully to life—if I could myself act and actively sacrifice myself. Now I can do nothing but suffer, gaze into the blue heavens and see misfortune after misfortune pass over me without daring to raise a finger! * * *

Memory comes to me too, memory, that freight of a life without content! Oh, with what anguish I remember! I can only still love my wife just because I can only remember her. I must, then, remember her continually, and every sense of past suffering vanishes when I think of her, only to give place to the greater anguish pity awakes in me. I can only lament for her now, no longer for myself, for every ground of complaint on my side is blotted out by our parting. Poor woman! She was so rich, so endowed, whom could she not have made completely happy! Alas that she lacked just one thing, the one thing without which all love is illusion, all the cares of love a martyrdom, all union, torment—the understanding of the one we believe we love, that understanding which alone gives joy in the loved one, which makes us bear all sorrow joyfully. I had to part from thee, that I might be able to love thee again—I had to do it though it destroyed both of us! Now I can weep for thee. * * So I can regret nothing, for I know that I—even in the enjoyment of the greatest new happiness—have only become richer in love, for now I can love thee too till my life's end!

How do I live now? Where do I live now? Do I live at all? Yes, you dear women came to me—and so I *could* live! * * * You accepted from the man what the artist gave you—from the artist

what the man confided in you! Ah, how safe I felt in your love, how calmed, how glad to be one with you. * * *

In a year we shall meet again—in a year, too, I hope to see Jessie once more. In a year! God in Heaven! Have we not all experience enough already to know what a year means? * * *

God knows where we are to turn now. Every place is the same to the homeless, for every place is equally bad, equally valueless. I am grieved for Karl. I am dragging him about with me and I am afraid he will not be happy with me much longer.[1] Well, we have experienced many adventures and many disillusionments about places, and we think of going to a larger town, perhaps to Thun, near Berne. In any case it is cheaper to live in a real town than in the small places which are run *only* for visitors. Moreover, I must now be on my guard. If war [2] breaks out I shall not be safe in Switzerland for a moment, and—though I do not rate life immoderately high—I will not make a present of myself to some Austrian corporal. If the worst comes to the worst, I think I may have to flee to London. * * *

178. TO THE SAME

THUN, *26th–27th June*, 1850.

* * Five days ago Karl received a letter from Bordeaux in which Jessie [3] told him, very much in brief, that she * * "meant to break with the immediate past and would throw in the fire unread any letters in my handwriting. He was to burn these lines of hers at once, and just tell me shortly their main contents."

In answer to these very summary proceedings against me I might have expressed myself to her with similar brevity, somewhat as follows: That this showed me, anyhow, that I was not capable of inspiring in Jessie *love* as I understand it, but that I was, nevertheless, grieved to find that I could not even win the least respect from this woman for me.

Herewith, however, I have to place in your hands the testament of a love of which I shall never be ashamed, and which, though now corporeally dead, may perhaps be a source of glad remembrance and emotion to me till my life's end. Therefore understand me aright, dear lady, if (with something less of stoical brevity) *I* tell you of the antecedents of the catastrophe which has, with such childish brevity, been announced to *me*.

In any case you understood me when you were staying on Lake

[1] Karl Ritter, however, moved to Zurich with Wagner; cf. *My Life*, pp. 543, 546.
[2] Between France and Austria, which still occupied Northern Italy at that time.
[3] Cf. *My Life*, p. 541.

Geneva, and I explained to you the feelings that decided me to go instantly to Bordeaux after receiving that letter. Even then I thought I could see by the turn which things took that Jessie had undertaken too much for her strength and was not equal to her project. * * *

Jessie could only have carried out her decision as a *rebel*, not by treaty and agreement with those who would *never* treat with her. (Can a prince dominate a republic?) So the news that Jessie could not stand up against the pressure of circumstances, that she might suddenly think it better to make peace and let others dispose of herself and her decisions, evoked in me almost more than a doubt of Jessie's strength and faithfulness in the consciousness of her love. Our relationship had suddenly become something quite different. Before, I was conscious of the power to defend against all the world Jessie's decision *when once carried into effect*, and even of my capacity to *reconcile* those hearts most bitterly injured by it, but I knew I was quite without skill in the course of these proceedings to win a mistress for whom I ought not to have to sue to anyone, and whom I ought only to have to defend as a conquest already effected. I was then forced to see that all I could do was to defend my personal honour (of course with the utmost sincerity) against the rough assaults made upon it on this occasion, and openly to avow my love and the inexpressibly high value I attached to its fulfilment; but that all the same I could only leave Jessie to rely on her own strength, since she was in bonds from which she and she alone could free herself. After this last experience I had almost sufficient reason to despair of her strength to do this; nevertheless, I did what it lay in me to do, and I assure you I acted with utter indifference to the danger of receiving a bullet through the brain from the injured husband.

You will recollect now our conversation at Villeneuve, when I entirely agreed with your view that for the present there was little or nothing to be done for Jessie from without—that only she herself could help herself. She alone could render vain the plots which would quite naturally be directed by those about her against her feeling for me, by unshakable persistence and strength. Well, now she has abandoned and betrayed the only power which could have helped her—the power of love! She is lost to herself—for she is WEAK!!

The woman to whom we sought to bring deliverance has proved herself a child! Forgive me—but I can only find her pitiable! * * *

I do not know what lies they told her about me, or whether *she* herself may suddenly have become so stupid—pardon me the word!—as to put a wrong construction on certain passages in my letter to Madame Tailor. I eventually wrote to this lady that, great as

was my love for Jessie, immeasurably valuable as its fulfilment must seem in my life, I could yet, in the pride of my soul, renounce the hope of it altogether were I to discover that Jessie's love for mé had not the irresistible force which could alone influence *her*—her mother—in her favour; for I desired not to have to woo her, but to receive as an unhoped-for, highest bliss, the gift of herself from herself. Could Jessie's understanding of love have become so purblind all at once as grossly to misunderstand this expression of feeling on my part? It was just *that* that was the inexpressible charm of Jessie's love—she understood me in everything so quickly, so clearly, so surely—I could not discover the least little cloud of inveterate, narrow-minded prejudice in her—or, if such appeared, the lightest breath of mine dispersed it forthwith! Or have they—and this is the supposition which gives me strength to act—have they gone to my poor wife to discover whether I am separated from her by parsons and jurists under all the penalties of the law? They may perhaps have got from her the—for them—welcome disclosure that I had concealed from her that I was wooing another, richer woman, and was therefore putting her off? With this evidence in hand they may suddenly have succeeded in persuading Jessie that my intentions towards her were not "true and honourable"? * * * *

So everything lies in ruins about me! I could almost shudder at any new touch of emotion, for it seems to me as though there were a curse upon it, and that whatever I approach in my need for love must needs show itself to me, shivered to fragments, its hollowness and inadequacy revealed. * * *

There is only one thing to be done now. Distasteful as is the occasion, I could almost bid it welcome as an opportunity for showing that I can act, for a deep sense of duty drives me to do so. From Jessie's laconic style I conjecture that something quite apart from your letters or mine must have occurred—and as I mentioned before, my presumption almost amounts to certainty that Jessie's prudent mother, who found no support of her views in you, has been in correspondence with my wife. If this is so, if she has turned to my wife for assistance in rescuing her daughter, she can only have done so (since keeping up appearances is what chiefly interests her) by misrepresenting my relationship to Jessie. It follows, according to my very natural suspicions, that she will have represented the case as though I had more or less—seduced her daughter; for it would of course seem to *her* a scandal that it was Jessie who, of her own free impulse, offered me deliverance. She will have pressed my wife to tell her whether we have an actual legal separation, whereupon my wife will naturally have answered that I told her

with sorrow and pain that I would never come back to her; that we must henceforth live apart; that I implored her to regard my decision as necessary and final and to put off inquiries after me, since, in order to avoid useless anguish, I wished for a time to lie concealed from her—or rather, from well-meaning but uncomprehending friends. My wife will also have said that I left it expressly to *her* alone as to whether *she* might think it advantageous to *herself* under the circumstances to secure a judicial separation from me, a thing that was to me personally distasteful and horrible. Out of self-respect, and perhaps, too, to justify me against the accusation of having plotted beforehand to get possession of Jessie, my wife may very probably have mentioned a second letter [1] also, which I wrote from Geneva early in May. * * *

In Montmorency, just at the time indeed that Jessie candidly revealed her feelings to me, I learned that certain Zurich friends who knew my affairs were seeking me out in Paris. It was, I may almost say physically impossible, to engage in lengthy discussion of the reasons for my latest step with any friend, even the most well-meaning. * * * I left Montmorency and Paris suddenly, without farewell to any of my friends. I went to Geneva where I heard from a Parisian friend (whose letters had followed me addressed on chance to half a dozen towns *poste restante*) that my poor wife had herself come to Paris to seek me out and offer explanations. I thought it probable that my wife had taken this step at the urgency of my Zurich friends and felt fairly sure, too, that she was entirely in error if she supposed that by attempting to explain the contents of her last letter she could heal dissensions infinitely older and more deeply rooted. Nevertheless the simple discovery that she had sought me out and wished to reconcile me, necessarily made a very great and touching impression on me. Though, as I say, I recognised she was mistaken about us two, this very mistake moved me, for it was the unequivocal expression of a love stronger than her errors about a nature which she failed to understand. For my wife is no weakling and I should have supposed rather that she would turn her back on me proudly and coldly after receiving my parting letter. Indeed I was actually afraid that this pride of hers would make her refuse to receive support from me, a thing which, as I wrote to her, would have made me inexpressibly unhappy. In such circumstances the news affected me very powerfully, and little things that were told me of her filled me with the deepest, most painful sympathy for the woman, who was *in any case* unhappy. It

[1] No. 175.

was impossible for me just then to strike a worst and final blow at her tormented sensibilities. * * * I wrote, therefore, to my wife and told her of my decision—actually just formed at that time—to travel in Greece and the East. I knew what a good effect this news must have upon her. It set her right in a way, particularly in the eyes of my Zurich friends, who could now believe that I wanted to get free, not so much of my wife, as of present conditions as a whole. Whereas I insisted expressly on the contents of my former letter and once more set forth our separation as a necessity, I did not omit to show the most sympathetic care for her. * * * "Who knows," I concluded, "if God gives us life, perhaps we may some day see each other again."

Did I do wrong, as man and physician, to speak to the poor thing so? * * * I had but just previously written a solemn, earnest, most momentous letter to Jessie, explaining the whole situation to her without softening anything down and insisting most solemnly upon the difficulties attending the decision she had recently imparted to me and the consequent need of the deepest and strongest conviction. I was still not perfectly certain of her constancy, and moreover must have thought it a most ill-timed piece of cruelty to deal my wife a final, hope-destroying blow just then, just at a moment when I felt irresistibly urged to comfort her somehow or other. * * * I for my part should have thought it unworthy, and indeed impossible, to propose a divorce from my wife *beforehand*, since hitherto I lacked any moral (!) ground for one. But that I was *resolved*, even to the point of cruelty to my wife, will prove to you how overpoweringly strong was my love for Jessie; for if I weigh what Jessie's husband was to her against what my wife must be to me after the—for her—unheard-of sufferings of our life together, the sacrifice demanded of Jessie fades to absolute nothingness compared with mine. Moreover, she never betrayed to me the least trace of love for her husband. * * *

(If knowledge of the contents of this last letter to my wife has enraged Madame Tailor, I can well understand and explain her anger according to the idea I have formed of her character, for I know that *she* has never understood me at all. But if Jessie, too, has been brought to change her mind by the contents and the form of this letter, I can only explain it by believing that she *wanted* to be brought round, for she must have understood me here, she must have recognised in it the *man* she loved, or else she never loved me and never understood me. Well, this is only said in passing!)

Enough! My ideas of my relationship to my wife have entirely changed since I came to know the effect of my parting letter upon

her, * * * and, indeed, I have never regarded a separation from her, even had it come about, as she so often threatened, through some decisive step on her side, as anything other than a counsel of despair which could only be carried out at the expense of great suffering to her. I am consequently beside myself with indignation now at the thought that her grief should have been cruelly intruded upon and exploited by a mother whose only care in this matter has been for a heartless conventionality, and I see that at the moment my sole duty is to find out if my fears are well grounded, and, if so, to give my wife a true account of the circumstances, less for the sake of justifying myself in her eyes, than to comfort her and pacify her deeply injured sense of honour. * * *

I wish to clear this matter up, but I do not wish to approach my wife in person * * * so I have asked Karl to go to Zurich and have a talk with my friend Baumgartner and discover through him what has happened recently and whether I have been slandered to my wife. * * *

* * * Remain true to me, and if you cannot believe implicitly, then question me! I am ready to stand any inquisition, for I am not ashamed to answer even for my mistakes. * * *

If only I can work again soon! I shall love to do it, for I know my works give you joy. If only my imagination will come to my aid—for once more reality for me has faded to fantasy! I shall not do *Wieland*. The faults of this poem are too clear to be disguised from me now by my outwearied personal emotions. Wieland is dead—he will never grow wings! I am thinking of settling down next to a paper on Genius [1]—the communal and solitary. Then, when I am strong again, I shall begin on the *Achilleus* [2]! * * * *

179. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

THUN, *2nd July*, 1850.

* * I send you herewith the promised directions for the performance of *Lohengrin*. Forgive me that they come so late—I learned only recently that you have acquiesced so kindly and with such readiness in my wish to have this opera produced. When some day we meet again I shall have much to tell you. For the present, this much only of my recent past, that my contemplated journey to Greece [3] has come to nothing; there were too many impediments.

[1] Unfinished. *Das Genie der Gemeinsamkeit* (Collective Genius), published posthumously, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. xii.

[2] Unfinished. Fragments of *Achilleus* in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. xii.

[3] See No. 175.

I could not overcome them all, but indeed I should have preferred to leave the world altogether. * * *

Now that I find that you want to produce *Lohengrin* as early as August 28th, I am making haste so as not to be behindhand with my dispatches, at least from now on. * * *

In the first place I have expressed my mind in the enclosed [1] on scene and *décor*. You will be greatly amused by the sketches I have made for this purpose. I reckon them among the most successful creations of my genius. Where technique has failed me a little you must be satisfied with the good intention, which will be plain from the literary explanations annexed. * * * *

Now, first and foremost, I have an urgent plea to make to you. *Give the opera as it is, cut nothing!* I will myself suggest one single omission and even insist that it shall be left out * * that is, the second part of Lohengrin's narrative in the big closing scene of the third act. That is to say, after Lohengrin's words "*Sein Ritter ich bin Lohengrin ge-F-nannt,*" [2] an entire passage of fifty-six bars is to be omitted; "*Wo ihr mit Gott mich alle landen—F saht,*"—"*nannt*" therefore instead of "*saht.*" [3] I have gone over the whole thing frequently myself and come to the conclusion that this second part of the narrative is certain to have a chilling effect. This passage therefore should at once be omitted from the libretti. * * * *

* * * Tell me * * could we possibly contrive that I should be present *incognito* at the first performance at Weimar? This is a desperate question, particularly as I am no longer * * indifferent as to whether or no I inhabit a Royal Saxon jail. Now just listen! I have conceived a great respect for the Grand Duchess. Might not this lady—to whom I impute true nobility—be inclined at your suggestion to play an ingenious prank, snap her fingers at the police of all Germany and get me a safe-conduct—be it under an assumed name—from Switzerland to Weimar and back to Zurich? [4] I solemnly promise stoically to maintain my incognito, to lie *perdu* in Weimar only for a very short time in any case, to travel back afterwards at once and direct, and to see that the most absolute secrecy is preserved abroad. Or might it be more possible to do it through the Duke of Coburg? Much that I hear of him pleases me greatly. * * * *

* * * I am just on the point of quashing some most idiotic rumours which have got abroad about me by going back to *Zurich*.[5] * * *

[1] This was first published by the *Frankfurte Zeitung*, 8 February, 1914; reprinted by Kapp in *Wagner's Letters*, vol. ii.

[2] "His knight am I, and Lohengrin my name." (TRANS.)

[3] "Where you all saw me land, by God's will." (TRANS.)

[4] Liszt replied that this was impossible.

[5] Cf. *My Life*, p. 547.

180. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, 10*th July*, 1850.

* * * * As I told you before, it is fully established that my wife's love for me was stronger and more implicit than her doubts and misunderstanding of my character. Since these last experiences, it has given her strength to believe me implicitly—even in matters in which she never understood me. And more than that. She could not do otherwise than believe the charges brought against me by the Bordeaux people, and yet she cherishes but *one* wish, that I should return to her, because in her very heart of hearts she has come to know that *without me* she cannot live. She would never have accepted monetary support from me unless I gave it her with my own hand.

In the power of this love, which she has grown conscious of, victorious over all doubts and errors, in a time of stress and calamity, she seems to me an entirely new and different being from my wife of old. So it was that I came to know what I am to her, and I could not therefore hesitate a moment to wish to *be* that to her in actuality. * * * *

181. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH, *early in August*, 1850.]

You are a friend—that I must say! Let me say no more, for though I have always recognised friendship between man and man as the noblest and most splendid of human relationships, you have realised this idea for me completely, so that I have no longer only to imagine, but may feel and understand what a friend can be.—* * * *

Having found you, I am not only consoled for my banishment from Germany but must even see my banishment as a piece of good fortune, for *I* could not possibly have done so well for myself in Germany as *you* can do for me. But only you could have done it! * * * *

* * * In all our work as poets and composers we only *will to do something*, we *cannot do it*. Only in representation have we the actual *ability to do—Art*. Believe me, I should be ten times happier were I a *dramatic performer* [1] instead of a dramatic poet and composer. This being my belief, I can no longer care to create works for which I have deliberately to renounce all hope of life in the present, in return for some flattering, fictitious future immortality. What cannot be made *actual* to-day will never become actual in the future. I no longer vainly dream of creating for the future, passing over

[1] See end of No. 165.

the present, but if I am to create for the present it must, to be sure, show me a less repellent face than it does at the moment. I renounce fame, especially the crazy wraith of fame in posterity, because I love mankind much too well to condemn it for my vanity's sake to that bankruptcy in which alone flourishes the posthumous fame of the departed. As things are, I am allured no longer by ambition but by a longing to share myself with my friends, the wish to please them, the desire for artistic creation. When I feel this longing and this wish satisfied I am happy and perfectly content. * * *

Last May I sent the poem of my *Siegfried* to a bookseller for publication—just as it is.[1] In a short preface I make it clear that I have no hope of either the completion or the performance of this work, and therefore lay it before my friends simply as an uncompleted *project*. In fact, I will not compose my *Siegfried* to give it to the four winds, for the reasons I have just told you. Now you talk to me [2] of an association of artists which might be able to bring *Siegfried* to birth—but I must have performers for my heroes such as our stage has not yet seen. Whence are they to come? Well, not out of the sky, of course, but out of the earth. I believe you are really in the vein to grow them out of the ground for me by sheer enthusiastic cultivation! * * * *

182. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

[ZURICH, *early in August*, 1850.]

* * * * Liszt expresses the hope of actually getting performers for *Siegfried*, and writes to me of a commission to compose the work, backed up by an adequate payment in advance. I have nothing to say against finishing *Siegfried* for Liszt and the theatre of Weimar as soon as I am assured of the possibility of performance. In the end, I suppose, I shall make the music. This man Liszt is really too touching. A good deal of me remains strange and incomprehensible to him, and yet his love makes him go as gingerly to work with me as if I were a raw egg,—makes him absolutely disown himself rather than even touch me in the least roughly! That really is worth something! * * * *

183. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *16th August*, 1850.

* * * * Every time a letter comes from you it is a feast-day and all my friends are invited. * * *

[1] See No. 197. The preface to the proposed publication of *Siegfrieds Tod* was first published by E. Istel in *Die Musik*, 1910, vol. i.

[2] This letter is lost (see also No. 182).

Whenever I get news of you the desire springs up in me to begin some considerable artistic work again. I no longer have any great impulse to literary work. In the main I preach but to deaf ears. It is only the man with enough artistic experience to find the right thing for himself who understands what I am at. So it is better for everyone to arrive by experience, and for everyone to do what he can for himself. I still feel enthusiasm for the work of art itself. The music of my *Siegfried* already haunts my every member. All I need, then, is the right vein, and that *you* will create for me, you dear friend! * * * *

184. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *8th September*, 1850.

* * * * So far as I am able to judge of things at present from reports which have come to me of the character of the performance of my *Lohengrin* in Weimar, one thing strikes me principally as being absolutely obvious and beyond all possibility of doubt—namely the witness borne to your quite unheard-of efforts and self-sacrifice on behalf of my work, your touching affection for me, and the proof of your genius for making the impossible as good as possible. * * *

* * * Zigesar is doubtful whether the success of my opera is assured, affirms his zeal to exert every power to assure it, but seems to be still in doubt as to the means. * * *

So much is clear at any rate, the performance wearies by its length. I admit I was horrified when I learned that the opera played till nearly eleven at night. When I had finished the opera I played the whole of it through to myself, timing it exactly, and calculated that the first act should last not much over one hour, the second act an hour and a quarter, the last again a little over an hour; so that, taking the entr'actes into consideration, the duration of the whole opera might be estimated as from six o'clock till a quarter to ten at latest. I should have been constrained to doubt whether you took the tempi accurately according to my calculation had I not been expressly informed by musical friends, who know the opera well, that you took the tempi throughout as they knew them from me, indeed here and there perhaps rather faster than more slowly. I must accordingly suppose that the delay occurred where your direct control as conductor is in abeyance, namely in the recitatives. I have been assured, too, that the recitatives were not handled by the singers in the way that I have played them to my friends on the pianoforte. Let me make myself a little more explicit on this point. * * *

* * * Nowhere in my score of *Lohengrin* have I put the word "recitative" over a vocal phrase—the singers are not to know that there are recitatives in it. On the other hand I have taken care to weigh and to indicate the spoken emphasis of the words so closely and exactly that it ought only to be necessary for the singers *to sing the notes exactly according to their value in the tempo indicated* in order to arrive at the correct speaking expression through that means alone. * * *

A great impression was made upon me by Dingelstedt's appreciative and intelligent article [1] on the performance of my *Lohengrin.* * * * *

If my opera is cut, the thread of meaning which runs through it will be broken and, far from popularising it, will make my whole intention, which the public has but just begun to perceive, a closed book to this same public and even to the performers themselves. If I make terms with the enemy it means that *victory is not mine.* The enemy must be forced to surrender, and that enemy is the inertia and slackness of our performers who will have to be driven to feel and to think. * * * If my *Lohengrin* can only be kept going by *cutting* * * to suit the laziness of the performers, *then I shall give the whole opera up*—Weimar will then have no more interest for me than any other theatre—and *I shall have written my last opera.* * * * *

185. TO FRAU FRANCISCA VON BÜLOW, BERLIN [2]

ZURICH, *19th September,* 1850.

* * By my recommendation and guarantee, I have procured the post of director of music at the theatre here, for the coming winter season of six months, for my young friend Karl Ritter, who wishes to establish and extend his musical acquirements by the practical exercise of them as a conductor. Since I could only give the manager [W. Kramer] the necessary security by pledging myself to superintend and, in a sense, direct the active functions of my candidate, Ritter himself has every reason to view the position as a better school of technique than it would be easy to find elsewhere, as circumstances would not often be so accommodating. But two could take part in these exercises just as well as one, and, through Ritter, I have suggested this to your son, since he is staying in the neighbourhood, with an offer on my part to try to help him equally with Ritter. Yesterday, accordingly, I received a letter from your

[1] Cf. *My Life,* p. 561, and a letter from Wagner to Liszt of 2 October, not included here, on this article by Dingelstedt in the *Augsburge Allgemeine Zeitung.*
[2] *An Freunde* (To Friends), p. 91.

son thanking me with real emotion for this offer, as he sees that by accepting it he could rapidly fit himself for the practical rôle of a conductor of music and thus soon attain the position best suited to his capacities and to his most ardent inclinations. With corresponding regret he then revealed to me that he almost despaired of obtaining his beloved mother's consent to his taking my offer, since she cherished a persistent wish that he should pursue the public career of a lawyer and should at least first complete his studies to this end.

Permit one, now of mature age, who has ever accustomed himself to think and act not half- but whole-heartedly to the best of his ability, to express an opinion on this case. My interest in your son's development through adolescence has been sympathetic and not uninformed, but I have never exercised any other influence over him than that of my example as an artist and my prudent counsel. I have observed that his love of art, and of music in particular, is grounded in no transient emotional excitement but in great, and indeed extraordinary, capacity. It was upon my considered judgment, at my instigation indeed, that he nevertheless kept up serious scholarly studies, as I dislike nothing more than a mere learned musician without higher general education. At the wish of his family he devoted himself to the study of jurisprudence. He even endeavoured, out of piety towards his mother, to acquire interest in this study which was naturally antipathetic to him. What, now, is the plain and obvious result of all his struggles and experience? The most fully conscious, the most ardently expressed conviction that his devotion to music becomes more vehement and more enduring as he compares and tests this interest with and against the other! It is incontestable that this one humbly adored love of his stands first and foremost secure, and I can only think that you need but to be convinced of your son's desire to dedicate himself entirely to music, to make it your desire also. I should probably do you very great injustice were I to feel any doubt of this, but anxiety for your son's future may still perhaps make you wish for one thing, namely to secure him against the possibility of rueing his decision and against the consequences which might thereby arise as regards his so-called social position. You would wish your son at least to complete his studies as a jurist first, so that, in the conceivable eventuality of ill-success in the artistic career, the other might be kept open to him. Though the precautions of mother-love at its best are unmistakably revealed here, I must yet ask you to permit me the rejoinder that, in my opinion, the fulfilment of this wish would be ruinous—ruinous for the further development of your

son's character and activities, ruinous to the preservation of a happy, unbroken and loving relationship betwixt mother and son. After the unusually speedy development of your son's talent and character, you would commit a plain injustice were you to refuse to recognise it, to do it the injury of doubting it. If, however, you cling to this second wish of yours, such mistrust will be clearly indicated. * * * I can only remember with great pain a long series of years in my life during which, on similar grounds, I completely cut myself off from my good, but in this respect uncomprehending mother, and yet I cannot say otherwise than that I wish your son strength of mind equal to that which I possessed when I allowed not even the noblest tie of nature to hinder my free self-determination!

* * * Give your free, willing and ready consent to your son's remaining not one moment longer in bondage against his own established and proved inclinations. Give him leave to spend the coming six winter months with me here in Zurich to learn the practical work of a conductor under my guidance and in company with his friend Ritter. Await in peace of mind whatever further turn his career as a practical artist may take, relying on my doing whatever it may lie within my poor powers to do, and still more on our friend Liszt, to further his interests; and in all eventualities, in the trials which lie before him, when he is in need, when help is necessary, do whatsoever is within your power and your means to give him your most devoted support! You will thus have the satisfaction of having an excellent, perhaps an eminent, artist for your son, of giving to the world a joyous and spontaneous nature, and of knowing you have won the exquisite happiness of this man's, this son's, truest and deepest love! * * * *

186. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, ÖTLISHAUSEN

ZURICH, *19th September*, 1850.

Be brave, Hans, stand firm and all will come right! Send the letter on to your mother. Read it first and then you will know my opinion! At the same time I am sending Liszt a letter: he will do his part. * * * Come *at once*, and don't take a long time thinking about it! If you can, bring some money with you for yourself, but if not we must manage without. * * * But if you mean to waste time giving in and hesitating I shall not be pleased with you and you can stay away altogether!

You see I have become a boorish Swiss—that will not fit in with your rigid student code at all! * * * *

187. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *5th October*, 1850.

* * I have read your letter and your mother's.[1] Only you can know the strength of your love for art and of your aversion to the law. I have no doubt of your capacity, least of all now, when Liszt has just given me so favourable a testimonial to your executive talent as well. You can only bear witness to that love and to that aversion by *acting*, and until you have acted I can counsel you no further. * * *

As regards conditions here, I have this to say to you. The theatrical manager here [Kramer] has had the inexplicable good luck to get together a quite excellent company of singers, which actually made me want to conduct the opening performance—the *Freischütz*—yesterday. The success was so notable that I have no doubt that something really good for the theatre will be done on the part of the inhabitants of this town. Out of an honest desire to be really useful to the undertaking, I have decided to devote myself exclusively to the management for a period, but it cannot possibly be a long one. I am therefore very anxious to train up as quickly as possible a good manager for the theatre, to whom I can then leave everything at the first possible moment. Karl's introverted nature and his utter neglect of all executive faculties lead me seriously to doubt whether he can become a manager within the short space of time in which one will be wanted. He will become one, though, in time—I do not in the least give him up. * * * In your case I have good reason to suppose that I can reach my goal more speedily. If you come to Zurich at once the salary of 100 francs per month is at your service. You know that Karl has private means—he is only in straits for the rest of this year and from the New Year on he will be flush again. Till then you must try to manage on the money together, which will be easily possible. You can live with Karl in a very cheap lodging till the New Year; you will both take your meals with me as Karl is already doing. You ought to be able, and will be able, to scrape along, and after the New Year something more than that. * * * You will then have to look upon yourself as an actually appointed and salaried director of music; you will share your functions with Karl as you both think fit. * * *

* * * You can come to Zurich, then, without a farthing of money. Were I in your place and had I, on receipt of this letter, two farthings in my pocket I would set out for Zurich on foot; were I without the two farthings, even, I would take the road

[1] See No. 190.

without them and go hungry till I got to Zurich. But I would only do this, mark you, if I felt I could do no other. *It is only when actually here* that you can successfully negotiate with your mother and father. * * * *

188. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *8th October*, 1850.

* * * * I have been occupied with a paper which is to be entitled *The Nature of Opera*.[1] In it I intend to speak clearly and definitely on the subject of opera as a type of art, and to indicate as conclusively as possible what should be done to bring the germ within it to full flower. I should have liked to dedicate this paper to you, because in it I proclaim the redemption and justification of the *musician as musician*. I would do it if I did not think it wiser to leave you still—uncommitted as regards this present harangue of mine to our musical world. I know that by so doing I leave you freer. * * But because in this paper I want to argue the nature of the musical drama according to my own view of it, nothing can disturb me more at the moment than to see highly contradictory views once again advanced against me publicly by intelligent writers. What an illogical false priest the world must take me for, if I preach the drama with words while at the same time my works, they are told, are full of musical confusion and noise! * * * *

I am just going to do battle again with my deadly enemy—Winter! I have to consider sparing my health a good deal and so shall probably not be able to work on *Siegfried* to my heart's desire till the spring. But it shall be finished during the summer. I am not thinking of anything beyond this for the present. * * * *

189. TO PRINCESS CAROLINE SAYN-WITTGENSTEIN, WEIMAR[2]

ZURICH, *8th October*, 1850.

* * * * You ask about my *Wieland*? I am richer in schemes than in strength to carry them out. So I need a helper, yes, and more than a helper, an artistic bosom friend to carry it out just as I should like to—or better still it is to be hoped. I beg you to prevail upon Liszt to undertake the musical composition[3] of *Wieland* for me.

The poem * *, as I give it into your hands herewith, is the offspring of painfully and deeply felt inspiration, in the course of

[1] *Das Wesen der Oper*. Published under the title *Opera and Drama*.

[2] *Briefwechsel zwischen Wagner und Liszt* (Wagner–Liszt Correspondence), vol. i., p. 323 (3rd ed.).

[3] See Nos. 192 and 196.

which I was driven to make discoveries upon which, as an artist, I believe I may congratulate myself. At present, however, it carries me back to a time—which I would rather not recall. I can do no more with the poem *now*, either in verse or in music, and were I ever to regain sufficient calm to do so, I fear I should also have lost interest in it. So I have lately accustomed myself to the idea of giving up the poem entirely.

Should this *Wieland*, however, have the power to inspire Liszt upon first acquaintance as he inspired me, I would ask him to look upon the work as his own property. My scheme is fully worked out; nothing remains to be done to it but the simple versification which any fairly skilful versemaker could carry out; Liszt will easily find one. In the most important parts, the verse too has already poured out of me. I can no more at present—even the transcript cost me much distress.— * * * *

190. TO EDWARD VON BÜLOW, ÖTLISHAUSEN [1]

ZURICH, *12th October*, 1850.

* * I find it extraordinarily difficult to answer your * * letter, and I should probably have neglected to do so entirely if your son's action had not made it seem necessary for me to express my view of the situation.

You say you are agreed on the main issue that your son should follow his inclination and choose music definitely as his calling, and at the same time you tell me you wish me to advise Hans as to how in the immediate future he may usefully occupy himself with music in Berlin for a longer or shorter period.

Your son's talent is so far developed that I cannot now possibly advise him to do anything but give practical employment to his acquirements, learning through the exercise of his art whatever remains for him to learn. We musicians can only regard the actual practice of musical conducting as such a training. How your son is to get the offer of an opportunity to do this in Berlin, I cannot comprehend, for I am sure of this much at least, that it is everywhere uncommonly difficult for young practising inexperienced musicians to get entrance to just this practical side of their profession. It was a peculiar circumstance which chanced to give me the disposal of the conducting of music here in Zurich, and as soon as your son was in earnest about his musical calling he was, as a matter of course, as eager to grasp the opportunity offered through me of a practical education, as his parents would be to see him grasp it

[1] *An Freunde* (To Friends), p. 96.

when offered, were they, on their side, really in earnest in wishing to create opportunity for their son. Only this was just the difficulty on his parents' part. Hans' mother has said candidly that she considers my personal influence over him dangerous. Not because I feel insulted by this, but because I perceive the impossibility of overcoming his mother's prejudice against me (unless, perhaps, she were to give me the honour of a nearer acquaintance!), I feel compelled personally to maintain silence towards Frau von Bülow. At the same time I can naturally only continue to have to do with one who trusts me, and then, indeed, only if he assures me of this spontaneously.

You * * feel constrained to wish that the views of Hans' mother should prevail, and this * * solely on the ground that you thereby avoid causing her any painful emotion. * * *

Such shortcomings as have struck you in the development of your son's character, closer investigation will show to have originated in the lack of direction in that development hitherto. * * * *

You thought good to restrain your son from visiting me at Zurich during his stay in Switzerland. I must take it that you did this for the same reasons which have swayed you throughout in this matter and not from animosity to me, for it is only upon this supposition that I can write to you at all. I need see no more than this in the fact that you made a point—I grant you only out of regard for Hans' mother—of preventing your son from meeting me in Zurich, just when the way stood open for his speedy and definite entry upon an artistic career. But it is just herein that I cannot but see with perfect clarity that Hans' parents' whole intention was still to dissuade their son from the actual choice of a musical calling. * * *

I confess that for this reason I strongly mistrust Hans' parents' sincerity as touching their consent to his choice of a profession, and it is this mistrust, since it less concerns myself than your son's life's happiness as an artist, which has given me strength to take upon myself to cross your decisions. * * * In Hans' last letter to me I got a painful impression of one under constraint in every respect. As he was particularly troubled by the belief that there was cause for anxiety as to the possibility of a livelihood in Zurich, supposing he were to come here without his parents' consent, I thought it only right for me to reassure him at least on that point by telling him of the post open to him here, so that he could base his decision definitely on the strength of his inclinations and on nothing else. * * *

I am not in a position to judge whether or no it will please you to hear from me now that your son has really amazed me by the

rank he has already attained as an artist, that I see in him a quite extraordinarily gifted and rapidly maturing artist, and that my hopes for him are so great that—pardon me!—any blame of yours which I may perchance incur at the moment, I can only accept as part of the bargain, and cancel it out against the greatness of my hope, for I know that your displeasure will pass away when success becomes apparent. Yes, I know that some day your gratitude to me will be as deep as your love for your son! * * *

191. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, 13*th October*, 1850.

* * * * I think now I shall be able gradually to withdraw from the theatre. From the first I regarded it purely as a school of conducting—for a moment, indeed, I hoped to make something more of it—but it has run to seed too completely. Nothing more can grow on this soil of ours. Money is the only power which might effect an ephemeral miracle—but, well, this power is otherwise engaged!

This fellow Liszt is ever an amazing source of strength to me. To have become what he has become, after being what he was, is a thing that seldom happens. His friend [1] has inquired of me about *Wieland*. I have made Liszt a present of it.

Now and then I feel very happy just to be here in Switzerland. There is nowhere in the world now where I would rather make my home. My friends are thoroughly unaffected people—even when they are not something more as well. The other day I was at tea with some German professors resident here. Horror seized me and drove me back again with absolute yearning into the arms of my Swiss friends. I notice an immense inertia about them all. How well it is accounted for by the very air they breathe! At the moment I can think of nothing more idiotically disgusting than a German capital city. * * * *

192. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, 25*th November*, 1850.

* * * * Your paper [2] on *Lohengrin* has made a great, an encouraging and soul-stirring impression on me. I am filled with deep and salutary emotion at the thought that I have succeeded by my artistic works in producing such an effect on you that you feel dis-

[1] Princess Wittgenstein; see No. 189.

[2] Liszt sent the French MS. of this essay on *Lohengrin* to Wagner who got Hans von Bülow and Karl Ritter to translate it. First published 12 April, 1851, in the *Illustrierte Zeitung* (Leipzig).

posed to expend no small part of your extraordinary talent upon preparing the way for me, not only in practical matters but in the realm of the spirit. * * * *

I have also just read your article[1] in the *Journal des Débats;* the only thing I can find comparable to your persistence in serving me is the spirit in which you do it.

Yes, yes, my dear, good Liszt, I have you to thank that soon I can be entirely the artist again. I regard the actual settling down to work again on my artistic plans after so long, as one of the decisive moments of my life. Between the musical composition of my *Lohengrin* and that of my *Siegfried,* there lies for me a world of storm but also—I know it—of fruitfulness. I had to turn over in mind a whole past lifetime, to bring its darkling things to the clear light of consciousness, to get the mastery of the reflections thus necessarily aroused in me by dwelling on them—by closest investigation of their meaning—so that I might once again throw myself, with clear and happy consciousness, into the beautiful *un*consciousness of artistic creation. * * * My work on the nature of opera,[2] the latest fruit of my meditations, is expanding to greater dimensions than I at first thought probable. If I wish to prove that music (as Woman) needs the fructifying power of the poet (as Man), I must take care that this glorious Woman does not become the prey of the first libertine who comes along, but that she shall conceive only by the man who yearns for her in true and irresistible love. * * * When I have finished this book I intend—if I can find a publisher—to publish[3] my three romantic operatic poems with an introductory "foreword" setting forth their genesis. Then, to put everything in order, I would collect[4] the best of my Paris articles of ten years ago (among them my Beethoven novelette) into a single and perhaps not unentertaining volume, from which anyone interested in me can get to know my tendency in its origins. Happy and at ease, I should then be able by spring to undertake and finish my *Siegfried* without interruption. Give me your blessing on it! * * * *

As to my request that you should appropriate the poem of my *Wieland,* it seems you have not understood me quite rightly. It is intended in all sincerity as a wish, and at the same time as a petition. Your business for the present and for the immediate future might postpone the fulfilment of my wish but could not make it impossible

[1] Of 22 October on the Weimar Festival; later amalgamated with the *Lohengrin* essay.

[2] See No. 188, note 1.

[3] This did not take place till 1852; the foreword is the well-known *Communication to my Friends;* see No. 204.

[4] This was not done till 1871; vol. i. of the *Gesammelte Schriften.*

unless you have no inclination to carry out my sketch. In this case —I beg you—do be frank with me! If you wish to carry out my *Wieland*—even though not till later—I for my part will do what I can to get it well versified. * * * *

193. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *12th December*, 1850.

* * * Karl has pleaded my necessity to you and you have helped. Be sure that I know how to value the greatness of the sacrifice which you make for my sake!

For the present, there was nothing to be made of the musical conductorship here, and I must explain this to you a little so that you may see that, properly speaking, it was Karl who was to be pitied in the whole affair, since, as he failed of his object, the course of events necessarily discouraged him. The first winter here I never entered the theatre. I only heard about it, listened to the performances of the musical manager outside the theatre, and discovered that he was a horrible bungler. I then thought, "Hallo! That might be an opportunity for Karl." When last summer I offered the director [Kramer] to stand surety for Karl, interpreting this surety as an obligation on my part to take a hand myself on occasions when I might like to do so, and even, now and then, to conduct a performance personally, he—the director—made a special point of getting good singers (a thing which he succeeded in doing —as I afterwards learned—chiefly by somewhat over-emphasising my part in the musical management). When it came to the first opera, Karl's heart—remarkably stout till then because in ignorance of the danger—began to beat rather fast. It was then, too, I first came to discover that Karl, who is in general uncommunicative, has also left the capacity for artistic communication very much undeveloped. He cannot express himself, either through the pianoforte or in speech. He must now be driven to do so, but in the case in point he should have been able to do it already. On the other hand I was surprised at the first rehearsal by the excellence of the singers. A glance at them, at the director and at Karl, showed me in an instant that the situation was other than I had thought it and that if Karl was to attain his goal it must be achieved gradually and with caution. I felt it my duty to the director, who trusted me implicitly, to have a care for the credit of his personnel, which was costing him far more than formerly. The attitude of the public to the theatre had for some time been unfavourable. A merely verbal or written recommendation from me would have been useless unless

I also recommended it by my personal participation in its performances. In addition to this, the assistance of amateurs—the orchestra being horribly weak in strings—was only to be hoped for if I myself were to conduct. I therefore rapidly decided on conducting the first operatic performance myself. The result was that public interest was directed to the opera, but at the same time my own and Karl's connection with the theatre was entirely changed. Furthermore, there was Bülow's wish for a share in our musical management to be reckoned with. This I approved of, firstly for Bülow's own sake, and secondly because I might assume that he, with his more easily developed capacity for self-communication—particularly through his playing of the pianoforte—would the sooner step into *my* place and thereby be enabled to smooth the way for Karl. My whole policy was of course directed to diverting from myself the public interest which, unfortunately, had concentrated strongly upon me. I tried to do it by directing public attention with all my power to the singers and their achievements, but it would not do; at the box office the director was asked whether *I* was to conduct, in which case seats were to be reserved, etc. Wish as I might to withdraw now with all speed, to do so would have been to leave Karl in too vulnerable a position, for he, naturally enough, was now in despairing mood and without confidence in himself to face what lay before him. It was quite otherwise with Bülow. He took hold more rapidly, and my whole object now was to bring on Bülow as soon as possible so that I personally could retire completely from the position of conductor, and that, Bülow once well established, Karl might gradually be brought to the same goal, through helping him and officiating himself. What with my concern for the director and the position I actually occupied in the public eye, I frequently found myself now in a really comic position, which, I am sorry to say, at length developed into a most vexatious one. * * * We all resigned together and I prevailed on a local choral society conductor to step into our place. Thus the director was covered. * * * A few days after the breach, both aspirants to conductorship got a call to St. Gall! Here, then, was the very thing I sought for them—and the most important part of it is that *there* they stand surety for themselves. * * *

If I am to compare Karl and Bülow, I can express my opinion in few words to this effect: Bülow communicates his thoughts more easily and pleasantly, but Karl has *more* to communicate than Bülow and that is the reason why he finds it more difficult.

Karl's dramatic poem [*Dietrich of Berne*[1]] has astonished me by

[1] Not published.

the conception and easy handling of the subject. The subject itself, and the exaggerated Germanic jargon in which he makes his characters speak, I was obliged to reject. The giant scheme of this poem leaves no scope for human beings. Karl's imagination has not yet found the vital focus at which it becomes actual beautiful human emotion. I look for Karl to cut a certain knot, and I hope. At present I have frequently to shield him against others.—

My health is better this winter than formerly. * * * *

194. TO FRANZ LISZT, STAYING AT BAD EILSEN, NEAR BÜCKEBURG

ZURICH, *24th December*, 1850.

* * * * At present I am still deep in my work on *Opera and Drama*. As I wrote to you, it is of the greatest importance to me, and I hope it will not seem unimportant to others. But it is going to be a big fat book.—Oh, if it were only spring and I could at last be a full-blooded creative musician again! Things are not at their best with me at present. * * * *

195. TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, HERMANN BROCKHAUS, LEIPZIG

ZURICH (ENGE), *2nd February*, 1851.

* * * * Never before in my whole life have I felt so happy and gay as in the summer of 1849 in glorious Switzerland. I admit that even my grave anxiety about my wife could not stifle the feeling of well-being which persistently animated me as I cut through a knot which could not be untied and completely reconciled myself to myself. In my Dresden post I was the most irresolute and wavering of men, outwardly at peace only when I was a hypocrite, inwardly sterile as soon as I became genuine. That is over, and no trouble in life can ever again disturb the inner harmony of my nature. I know that the best work I can do—and which I must do because I can —will earn me not money but only love, and that, indeed, from those who understand me because they desire to understand me. So about money, too, I am without anxiety, for I know that love cares for me. * * * *

And so—be content with the way things go with me!

* * * Ask Heinrich [Brockhaus] from me if he will keep the library in question [1] together, as it was made over to him. Probably some time he will be relieved of it by the repayment of the sum

[1] The library which Wagner had lovingly collected in Dresden had been seized by Heinrich Brockhaus, to whom Wagner was 500 thalers in debt at the time of his flight. Cf. *My Life*, p. 316.

lent me by him, so he would much oblige me if he would regard the books only as a pledge and not as a repayment. I thank him for his friendly offer to lend me certain books.— * * * *

196. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ENGE, ZURICH, *18th February*, 1851.

* * Have you all forgotten me? I have been so lonely of late that I often grow afraid. Can it be that you are angry with me about something or other? Perhaps about that foolish misunderstanding with Biedenfeld? He wrote to me that he had got to know that I had been annoyed about his great article [1] on *Lohengrin*. I was quite perplexed and could only think a misapprehension of some expression or other in one of my letters to you must have caused you, and consequently Biedenfeld, to mistake me entirely. * * * *

My big book is finished. It is entitled *Opera and Drama*. I haven't got a publisher yet, and as I must of course consider getting some money for it this time, I am a little uneasy about the affair.

I mean to spend next month in editing [2] my three romantic "Operatic Poems"; a rather lengthy introduction will enlarge upon the origins of these poems and their relation to music.

With the coming of spring I hope to begin on the composition of my *Siegfried* and to work on it uninterruptedly.

For the rest, my joy in life is not great. It is all very still and lonesome about me—and often I seem to myself like one dead and forgotten. * * * *

Not a word [3] more about *Wieland*!—I am heartily sorry that —you are right. * * * *

197. TO THE SAME

ENGE, NEAR ZURICH, *9th March*, 1851.

* * * * You told me * * that, in case of my *Lohengrin's* desired success, you intended to make use of the probably favourable mood of the Grand Duchess towards me, and get her to provide me with the means of subsistence during the composition of my *Siegfried*.

[1] I cannot ascertain where this article appeared. On 24 December, 1850, Wagner wrote to Liszt: "Tell Biedenfeld and the author of the article on *Lohengrin* in the *Frankfurter Conversationsblatt*, Fr[anz] M[üller], that I still hope to thank them by endeavouring as best I can to justify their high opinion of me in my new works."

[2] See No. 204.

[3] On 3 January, 1851, Liszt had written that he could not make up his mind to compose a *German* opera.

I had just given up practically all idea of operatic composition for the present and had already sent the poem of *Siegfried* to the printers to give it to the public as it was,—as an incompleted project. Your news at once changed my mind. * * * I countermanded [1] the printing of the poem, and instead prepared myself to compose for it. I chose the approaching spring, however, to begin the work —partly to let my winter mood, always somewhat sad, have time to pass away, but partly, too, to leave you time to carry your kind intention through at leisure. * * * For an entire six months—since the honorarium for *Lohengrin* from Weimar was used up—I have lived solely by the assistance of Frau Ritter of Dresden, because all this time I have been unable to earn anything save a small fee for the production of two Beethoven symphonies at the—wretched—local concerts. I know that my Dresden friend has exhausted her resources for the present, for this family is by no means a rich one and has only just sufficient means—and even these are seriously threatened at present, owing to awkward complications with Russia. I was nearly in the condition, therefore, of being obliged to think of earning money at all costs and consequently of abandoning altogether a work, totally useless in a pecuniary sense, such as the composition of my *Siegfried.* If I wanted in any way to square with my inclination work undertaken for the sake of money, it could only be by so-called "writing on æsthetics." But to make money by such journalism I should be obliged to give *all* my time to it and write for the papers "by the column." The idea is—very humiliating.——

If, however, I am now to undertake artistic work of the greater sort, I must * * feel my future secure for this year at least, otherwise I shall not have the necessary cheerfulness and collectedness —on my wife's account if on no other. With all the excellent qualities she possesses, she yet unfortunately does not understand my self of selves at all. * * * I am spiritually a stranger to her. * * * If, then, I am to have peace of mind * * I must * * be sure of a livelihood for the immediate future. Therefore I ask * * you about it once again. * * * I know that everything has combined to hinder your plan to help me. The Grand Duchess was ill and could not see *Lohengrin* till the third performance. Shortly after that, you left Weimar and consequently have as yet found no opportunity to work on the Grand Duchess to support your plan in a suitable and honourable manner.[2] * * * * *

[1] See No. 181. [2] Unsuccessful. See Nos. 200, 201.

198. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ENGE, NEAR ZURICH, *10th March*, 1851.

* * * * To be able to become a peasant is still my only wish! Spring brings me Nature again, that is my only comfort! It is bad that I always seem to myself to be guilty of affectation when I bear myself bravely and hopefully. One thing I can say with pride —however far I search, I believe no artist yet has suffered for his art's sake as I have—because I possess the eccentricity of being unable to conceive of art apart from mankind.

Let us leave that! I am glad to be engaged now on the business of getting my latest manuscript [*Opera and Drama*] into the right hands, that is to say, the bookseller's. * * * *

199. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

ENGE, NEAR ZURICH, *8th April*, 1851.

* * Upon mature consideration * * I take the liberty of offering you the score of my *Lohengrin* for publication. * * * My operas in themselves have not had a wide circulation through the theatres and at the moment have practically vanished from the stage. My latest opera has been produced in Weimar alone, through Liszt's energetic interest in me—and then but imperfectly. For many reasons it is unlikely that my operas will become more widely popular in the theatres in the immediate future.

In view of these facts you would necessarily, from the purely business standpoint, give me an unfavourable answer, of which I should have been so certain beforehand that I should have thought my request ridiculous were I not in a position to support it on quite other grounds.

A serious and judicial survey of our public dramatic music and its dependent literature, must awake a doubt in any honourable artist as to whether it is a field which can be further developed with any success. He is more likely to become convinced that a crop of the most utter artistic worthlessness is ripening upon it, and that it is becoming increasingly impossible for any honour-loving man to have any connection with it whatsoever. In aspiring minds this observation will be followed by the hope that this corruption may yet be checked by a radical improvement, a much to be desired ennobling of this branch of art. To further this with all his power is the impulse of every soul who is unwilling to drift to ruin in unmanly inactivity.

I may say that I have done what I could as an artist in this

direction. The greater the sacrifices I had to make for my artistic faith, the firmer and more unshakable did that faith become in me. In this faith, and because of these struggles, I created works of art which convinced all who studied them attentively of the truth and usefulness of my efforts. Many—and those not the least worthy—encourage me to pursue my road, thorny as it now is, because it must show to my brothers in art, too, the way of salvation. Now, however, I stand alone and my health, vehemently assailed, makes me doubt with reason whether my life will be long. I should naturally prefer not to leave it to chance that my ripest artistic works are preserved for the use of seekers after knowledge.

By way of literary publication, however, I have good reason to hope for a circulation which promises to assist the spread of knowledge of my works in general. In spite of the almost total disappearance of my operas from the theatre, I learn from Dresden to my no small surprise that there is a wide and growing demand for the same, and that the sale of those which have appeared in print is becoming better and better. I confess that the discovery of this almost unheard-of phenomenon has borne such strong testimony to the sound foundation of my hopes that it has actually encouraged and instigated me to contemplate the publication of my *Lohengrin*.

It would be a gracious act on your part * * worthy of your high culture and character, if you could consider venturing on an undertaking which would mean a present sacrifice and only later a perhaps very gradual success. But perhaps it is just herein that you would find an outlet for your zeal for a good standard of taste in art, which you, in your position as a music publisher, must frequently find yourself obliged to curb through the conflict between the public taste and your private judgment. At the same time you would be doing an act of neighbourliness and humanity to me if, by acceding to my request, you would afford me a longed-for opportunity of acquitting myself of a money debt [1] to you—very old already I am sorry to say! The discharge of this without some such expedient, seems to me in my present situation to fade farther and farther into the distance. I would gladly accept the cancelling of this debt as sole honorarium.

In offering you herewith the score and the (already completed) pianoforte arrangement of my *Lohengrin* for publication,[2] I feel the more keenly that I am in the position of a petitioner to you, as your acceptance would ease my mind on two counts. * * * *

[1] The remainder of a debt of 224 thalers on a piano purchased in 1843.

[2] The publishers agreed to the proposal but at first printed the pianoforte arrangement only. Wagner retained the author's rights over acting fees.

200. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ENGE, ZURICH, 18*th April*, 1851.

* * I did not wish to write to you at once, preferring to write more fully and more calmly on a favourable day. Then came the number of the *Illustrated Paper* for 12th April and once again I read through your printed article[1]! It will be hard indeed for me to convey to you what an impression your work of friendship makes on me just now! * * *

How curiously things happen between us! If I could but describe the love which binds me to you! * * * You are a wonderful man and our love is wonderful! If we had not loved one another we must have hated one another intensely. I must now out with everything, which I meant to write to you with studied moderation, just as it comes into my head. I shall begin on my *Siegfried* early in May, come what will! Away with all guarantees of my livelihood, I shall not starve. I have at last got a publisher for my book—Avenarius [2] of Leipzig; he is paying me 100 thalers; it is precious little but I do not think I can get any more. You will put by an odd halfpenny for me now and then. * * * Frau Ritter of Dresden does what she can from time to time; in the winter I shall earn a few louis d'or again by conducting symphonies—and so in the end I shall manage to cheat the Devil if only my wife can keep calm. So, then, we will leave Madame the Grand Duchess in peace. *I* cannot and may not ask anything of her even by a roundabout way.

You ask me about *Judaism*.[3] You know for certain that the article is mine; why then ask me? I appeared pseudonymously, not out of fear, but to avoid the question being dragged by the Jews into the region of naked personalities. I have cherished a long-repressed resentment about this Jew business, and the grudge is as necessary to my nature as gall is to blood. An incentive came when their accursed scribblings annoyed me intensely, so at last I let fly. It seems I have struck home alarmingly, and that is as I would have it, for I really only wanted to give them just such a fright. That they will remain our masters is as certain as that, not our princes, but our bankers and the Philistines are our lords now. My attitude towards Meyerbeer is now a peculiar one. I do not hate him, he is infinitely repugnant to me. This everlastingly amiable complaisant fellow reminds me of the most muddy, I might almost say the most

[1] On *Lohengrin*. See No. 192.

[2] J. J. Weber of Leipzig, however, took over the publishing. See No. 204, and Wagner's letter to Edward Avenarius, 3 May, 1851 [*Familienbriefe*, p. 172].

[3] This article, "Judaism and Music," which caused a great stir, appeared on 3 and 6 September, 1850, in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* under the pseudonym of "R. Freigedank."

degraded, period of my life, when he used to make a show of protecting me. It was the period of intrigues and back-stairs, when we are made fools of by patrons for whom we inwardly care not a rap. That is an utterly dishonourable relationship. * * * I do not reproach Meyerbeer in the least for the intentional ineffectiveness of his good offices for me—on the contrary, I am glad not to be so deeply his debtor as, for example, B[erlioz]. But it was time I severed my dishonest connection with him. Outwardly I had not the least inducement to do so, for even the discovery that he did not mean honestly by me could not surprise me, nor indeed put me in the right, for at bottom I had to reproach myself with having intentionally deceived myself in him. It was from within that the impulse came to me to relinquish every consideration of ordinary self-interest with regard to him. As an artist I cannot exist in my own eyes and those of my friends, I cannot think and feel, without realising and publicly confessing my complete antagonism to Meyerbeer [1]; and I am driven to proclaim it by sheer despair when I find again, even in my friends, the erroneous opinion that I have anything whatever in common with Meyerbeer. * * * *

201. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ENGE, ZURICH, 30*th April*, 1851.

* * Probably you have been troubled afresh by Karl's news. He will have written to you that I have lost—or relinquished—the prospect of support from the Court at Weimar. This has made you anxious and led you to suppose that I am relying on you for more help than you are able to give me. * * *

Your circumstances are not so unknown to me, for I was aware that every help you gave me in my need cost you * * a real sacrifice. Therefore I could never make the mistake of supposing I might burden you with the making of such sacrifices as a matter of course, and continuously. Though I have repeatedly been in need, it has never seemed to me anything but a happy accident that each time you should have been able to help me at the right moment. But the last time you helped me I felt very unhappy about it. * * *

Liszt wrote to me himself in great distress about this affair, and —much as it pained him!—had to ask me to apply, by means of an actual petition for support from the Court at Weimar for the composition of my *Siegfried* for the theatre there, if I wished to see fulfilled the hopes he had formerly aroused in me. I probably need not enlarge to you on the reasons which most definitely decided me

[1] See No. 126.

against such a beginning. I expressed them to Liszt, however, and made him understand plainly that I would rejoice openly before the world were such a woman as the Grand Duchess of Weimar to offer me a helping hand of her own accord, but that I * * could not possibly sue for her help, and that least of all could I, under existing circumstances, make a business engagement of the composition of my *Siegfried*.— * * * *

* * * Were I, for the sake of a mere living, to disavow the most essential thing in my life or doom myself to work irreconcilable with my nature, I should not only seem to myself contemptible, but I should doom myself to actual physical suicide. We are agreed about this. I must not therefore bow my head to prevailing conditions, I must not, for example, become musical manager at any theatre which may happen to offer. * * * In a few days you will receive a brochure of mine in which, under the title of *A Theatre in Zurich*, [1] I indicate the possibility of creating a thoroughly good theatre with the materials to hand here. It has become my wish and my will to found this theatre and to devote myself entirely to it.

* * In my brochure I have been obliged to admit candidly that I do not suppose I can very speedily win the public to my views. Nevertheless, certain experiences of mine here lead me to hope that what I have in mind is no impossibility. Last autumn I made proposals to the local Musical Society for the appointment of a good orchestra. The people did not understand me and I was refused. Well, later I rehearsed a few symphonies and the effect was so astounding that now the same people are taking up my proposals on their own account and are setting about the creation of a good orchestra in earnest. I hope the same thing may happen with my theatrical proposals.[2] * * * You think you must be preparing trouble for me with the news that you can only support me a year longer. Since I never believed I might count on continuous support from you, you make me quite unexpectedly and happily relieved by giving me the prospect of a year. * * * Even if my hopes of Zurich come to nothing, however, I can yet face the future more calmly. I find daily that interest in my work is growing. * * * *

202. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, ÖTLISHAUSEN

ENGE, ZURICH, *12th May*, 1851.

* * * Sorry as I am that you had, in the end, many an unpleasant experience to go through in St. Gall, I am yet on the whole satisfied that you have had experiences. It would, of course,

[1] This pamphlet is included in vol. v. of the *Gesammelte Schriften*.
[2] These did not succeed.

have been a mistake to remain longer under conditions of that kind. * * * Therefore I am glad that you recognise, besides unpleasant memories, certain good effects upon yourself, particularly that you have learned to feel the *seriousness* of art, even though by indirect means as opposed to direct practical experience. I hope your people will see the good you have acquired and will continue to support you while you need it. Consequently I am also very glad about your reconciliation with your mother. I am always wishing you would go to Weimar. Do you know that Chelard has been pensioned off and that Liszt is accordingly sole kapellmeister? I had to write to Liszt about his prospects for the Goethe Foundation and did so in a very full letter, which I am inclined to think he will have printed. In this letter [1] I insist particularly on the foundation of an *original* theatre (in the fullest sense of the word) and suggest Weimar as a favourable situation for it. * * * Have no qualms about a contingent lack of poetic facility. You are a full-blown musician and probably have just sufficient poetic gift to become the right sort of musician I have in mind (Karl's poetic abilities predominate; he has still to show me clearly a corresponding musical capacity).— * * * *

You will probably go on turning *Tristan* over in your mind.[2] Why not overtures to the *Oresteia*?—I think it would be better in any case for you to write a special overture to each piece in the trilogy (to *Agamemnon*, *The Choëphori* and *Eumenides*). Each of these would gain immeasurably in definition, since the situation could be much more clearly modelled than it could be for the whole trilogy at once * *. You would then get certain motives important enough, pliant and plastic enough, to be introduced into all three overtures and therewith achieve in these three pieces the only kind of symphony [3] still possible, a symphony elucidating the full content of a pre-existing and most exalted work of poetry. The second movement of this symphony (the overture to *The Choëphori*) would—in spite of the violent catastrophe of the close—be essentially an *adagio* in character—the whole range of sorrow and lamentation, etc.—

My next opera is now bespoken in Weimar for a considerable sum. I am applying myself to the work now, but I have very much enlarged my scheme. *Siegfried's Death* is—for the present—unproducible and incomprehensible by the public. Therefore I am preparing the way with a *Young Siegfried*. * * *

[1] *Über die Goethestiftung* (On the Goethe Foundation), first published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. v.).

[2] Bülow abandoned this project.

[3] Bülow accepted this idea but did not get beyond a rough draft of the first movement.

203. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ENGE, ZURICH, 22*nd May*, 1851.

* * * * So now you want another copy of my *Autobiography* [1] to use for an article on me. What am I to say to that? * * * I have it not and cannot get hold of it here. If you really want to look over it, you could probably get a copy more easily in Weimar if I tell you exactly where it is to be found—that is, in the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* [2] in the year 1843. * * * But I can scarcely think you will find much in it, except confirmation of the fact that I too have erred much in my artistic career, not being (like Mendelssohn) one of the chosen of God into whose mouth the only true infallible "solid" bread of art falls as manna from Heaven and who can therefore say "I have never gone astray!" * * * At the time when I composed that autobiography at Laube's desire I had, it is true, written my *Flying Dutchman* and sketched out the poem of *Tannhäuser*, but it was only through the *completed Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* that I became perfectly clear about the direction in which unconscious instinct had been driving me. I must myself take occasion later to explain [3] the process of development therein perceived, when I publish my *Operatic Poems*. * * * *

You will by now have received my little pamphlet *A Theatre in Zurich*.[4] Much of it, yes most of it, will be beside the point for you, as conditions here are so different from those in Weimar. But the little paper will probably make pretty clear to you my ideas as to the nature and efficacy of an "original theatre." * * *

* * * *Through you*, you in Weimar are already on the right road. If *originality of achievement* is increasingly your *conscious principle* in espousing this way, if, again, this principle is proclaimed *as* a principle, and if the consciousness of this wins you helpers in increasing numbers, you will very soon see how the thing you wish for may gradually be realised. I was uncommonly pleased with Raff's opera [*King Alfred*]—so far, so good—but now to proceed and, to speak straight out, *you must do your part*. Write an opera for Weimar I implore you. Write it just to suit the forces you have there, and which ought to be increased, ennobled and broadened through your work. Do not give up your plans for *Die Welschen* [5] on my account * *, but stick to what is nearest you, too, your present homeland. * * * *

One thing more. Do something thorough to give your theatrical

[1] *Autobiographical Sketches* (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. i.).
[2] *Society Newspaper*. (TRANS.)
[3] See No. 204.
[4] See No. 201, note 1.
[5] See No. 196, note 3. The *Welschen* are the inhabitants of French Switzerland.

company a sound education. Nowhere will you find the artists you want unless you create them for yourself. See to it that your singers, as the *next most important thing*, are good actors. Who cannot speak and declaim well, how shall he be able to sing? * * *

* * * The wild confusion of all *genres* and styles is the horrible thing which deprives our performers of any kind of artistic consciousness. Gluck to-day, Donizetti to-morrow, Weber to-day, Rossini or Auber to-morrow, serious to-day, frivolous to-morrow—what is the result? That the company can give *neither* Gluck *nor* Donizetti, neither the grave nor the gay. What a terrible business these *translations* are! People generally accustom themselves to absolute meaninglessness in the dramatic side of their performance. Well then, see that the translated libretti are rationally handled. Most important of all, accustom the singers to think of their performance as first and foremost a *dramatic* one; then they will solve the *lyrical* problems for themselves. The most suitable works to this end are those of the old French school, because in them it is very easy to find a comprehensible dramatic intention. How is a company which cannot present Cherubini's *Water Carrier* or Méhul's *Joseph* in a good and effective manner to be educated up to the (*comparatively*) enormous difficulties, for example, of an opera of mine?—The main thing is always—new works, and works, too, composed with an eye to our personnel and definitely for this theatre.— * * * *

204.—TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

ENGE, NEAR ZURICH, *4th June*, 1851.

* * * * For several reasons I find myself induced to carry through a project planned but since set aside, that is the publication of three of my operatic poems (*The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*) with a full introduction.

A rather big piece of literary work of mine, which will soon be published by J. J. Weber under the title *Opera and Drama*, describes to those interested in my art a tendency which I have come to adopt through that same art, but which I am now for the first time consciously pursuing.

Since many able critical minds have been busied about me lately, chiefly owing to *Lohengrin*, I now feel the necessity of explaining to my friends the apparent contradiction between those works and my most recent opinions. I can think of nothing more suitable for this purpose than a definitive edition of the poems of my three last operas, by means of which I can best make plain my meaning on the subject of my development as a dramatic composer.

As the high light would thereby fall on *Lohengrin*, it would perhaps be not unserviceable, even from the point of view of success to your enterprise in publishing the music of the same, if from another aspect —that of the written word—attention were to be drawn to this music.[1] * * * *

205. TO FRANZ LISZT, STAYING AT BAD EILSEN, NEAR BÜCKEBURG

ENGE, ZURICH, 29*th June*, 1851.

* * * I have completely finished the poem of my *Young Siegfried*. I am *very* pleased with it, and anyhow it is what I was bound to do at the moment and the *best* that I have done up till now. I am *really* happy about it!

With my vehement method of working I am always somewhat done up at the finish, and I must now take a short time to recover. I cannot make up my mind just at present to make a copy for you. * * *

One thing more! In my last letters I have entirely forgotten to mention the Härtel affair. Upon a sudden whim I approached Breitkopf and Härtel about *Lohengrin*.[2] * * * I was bold enough to ask them to print the *score*! First they accepted my offer of the pianoforte arrangement. I insisted again on the full score too. * * * For a long time I heard nothing. To-day [3] Härtel's write me that they * * are prepared to print *the full score too*. How has that come about? Now that they have given in to me it seems to me almost fabulous—*the full score of an opera which has been given only in Weimar ! !*—

What do you think? Can I really expect such a thing of these people? There is a nobility about it which, I feel, puts me to shame! I am almost inclined not to take advantage of Härtel's readiness on *Lohengrin's* behalf, on condition that they print the full score of *Young Siegfried* instead. This child of mine, that I first begot and have yet to bear—lies naturally nearer my heart than *Lohengrin*, for it should be stronger and healthier than the latter. If Härtel's issue the score of *Lohengrin* now, the profits on it will be *so slight* that any desire of theirs to print the score of *Young Siegfried* will perish utterly. * * * What do you think then? * * Shall I reserve

[1] The publishers undertook to publish but made a number of difficulties with Wagner about the printing of the preface (cf. Correspondence). The work appeared late in 1851 with the date 1852 beneath the title *Three Operatic Poems, together with a Communication to my Friends as Preface.*

[2] See No. 199.

[3] The publishers' letter is dated 25 June.

Härtel's offer for *Siegfried*[1] and give up *Lohengrin*? I can hardly believe that both together would be possible. Advise me!— * * * *

206. TO THE SAME

ENGE, ZURICH, *11th July*, 1851.

* * * You agree with me as to Härtel's offer; that is as I thought, and it is a confirmation of my right instinct in the matter.

Well then—the *full score* of *Siegfried*! I feel as safe with you as a child in its mother's lap, you watch over me so well, dearest of friends!

Uhlig is here just now. With very great labour and self-sacrifice, he has saved up enough to be able to visit me in Switzerland. In view of his cool, tranquil and passionless nature I value this young man's faithful adherence and friendship very highly. As a very young musician indeed, his uncommon musical mastery and good judgment attracted my notice in the orchestra at Dresden. Unusual force of character and a stable and virile disposition were traits which drew my closer attention. I opened my doors to him, found him a man self-developed, unaided in circumstances of great penury, and won in him a friend who now, far away from me, makes it the task of his life to serve me to the best of his powers in a way which—the impulses of love being equal in both cases—I can only find surpassed by you with your brilliant genius. Uhlig still has many rough corners and will probably never rub them all down, but even while I have to laugh at his manner I have to respect him too. I am glad that you also were able to accord him notice.— * * * (By the way, Uhlig is, they say, a natural son of the reigning King of Saxony.)— * * * *

* * * God, how I delight in my *Young Siegfried*! He has redeemed me once for all from authorship and journalism! I will establish my health thoroughly this month, so that next month I can throw myself into the music. * * * *

207. TO AUGUST RÖCKEL, WALDHEIM IN SAXONY (PRISON)

ZURICH, *24th August*, 1851.

* * Only a short time ago I was credibly informed that you and your companions in misfortune are allowed to receive letters from acquaintances and not only from near relations, as long as these letters touch on purely personal interests, or only such, at least,

[1] See following letter. It was not till 23 August that Wagner made this proposal to Breitkopf and Härtel, but on 15 September the firm confirmed its decision to publish the *Lohengrin* score.

as have no connection with politics. As what I have to say to you could only concern firstly my deep and sorrowful sympathy with your fate, and secondly news of my doings, I at once decided to write to you, only first taking steps to get as accurate news as possible about your condition. I learned, then, through your private physician * * that the rumours that you had forfeited permission to do literary work by unruly behaviour were unfounded and that, on the contrary, things were as bearable for you as is possible in such a place and that your vigour was not yet lost. I confess that it was this news which first made me capable of writing to you as I would have liked to do.

As you can imagine, since our parting I have constantly inquired for news of your fate with very keen interest and have done my best to follow it. * * *

The outward events of my life are soon told. * * * *

* * * How lacking in honour * * how worthless is our whole present-day "art," is completely apparent when she divests herself of the last rag of shame and openly confesses that she means to preserve her existence at any price. I need not tell you how unhappy a man of my kind must feel under these conditions. I have to surrender myself open-eyed to illusion in order to justify any kind of activity which, from another aspect, is the only thing that can still blind my eyes to the general badness of things.

Further theorising repels me now—and Liszt has spurred me on to a new work of art. Accordingly I have composed a poem, *Young Siegfried*, a thing calculated, indeed, to bring me great joy yet. My hero grows up wild in the forest and is educated by a dwarf * * for the purpose of killing a dragon who guards a treasure. This treasure of the Nibelungs is a matter of exceeding great moment and all kinds of crimes are associated with it. Siegfried is almost the lad of the fairy-tale who goes out into the world "to learn what fear means," which he will never succeed in doing because with his strong common sense he sees all things as they are. He destroys the dragon and kills his teacher the dwarf, who sought to make away with him secretly for the sake of the treasure. Siegfried, yearning for an end to his solitude, now learns from a bird's song —having won the power to understand it by accidentally tasting dragon's blood—of Brynhilde, who sleeps on a rock surrounded by fire. Siegfried penetrates the fire and awakes Brynhilde—the Woman of rapturous love embraces. I can indicate no more here. Perhaps I can send you the poem itself. Only one thing more—we have already touched on it in our ardent talks—we cannot be what we might be and ought to be until—*Woman is not awakened.*

Ah, what kind of songs am I singing to you, most unfortunate of men! Believe me, I am not satisfied to be able to do nothing but sing. I shall complete *Young Siegfried*, but I shall never deceive myself for a moment into believing that this is anything but a beautiful illusion and that Reality surpasses all. * * * *

208. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, WEIMAR

ALBISBRUNN, 30*th October*, 1851.

DEAR HANS—(OR MOST ESTEEMED FRIEND!)

* * * * I have just written to Uhlig about *Tannhäuser*. He is to forward the score arranged as I would wish the opera to be given in Weimar. It is to be hoped that the reasons which made Liszt decide on the cuts no longer exist. Weimar must set a good example now.

* * * I cannot understand why Weimar doesn't produce my *Flying Dutchman* now. Two and a half years ago Liszt was quite right to be shy of letting the less brilliant *Dutchman* follow hard upon *Tannhäuser*—but now things are different! My friends no longer need to be led blindfold! They know now where they are with me and it is just *they* who would now find deep and lasting satisfaction in *The Flying Dutchman*. In my *Introduction to my Poems* [1] (which Liszt must get at once) I explain very fully the relationship of this opera to the two succeeding ones. I hope that he and my friends may thereby be incited to take up this opera. *It belongs to the other two* as the *beginning* to the middle and end, and a knowledge of this "trefoil" is indispensable to whosoever will know *me*.— * * * *

Liszt has the score. Here and there the brass might be moderated a little with discretion. The cadenzas in Daland's aria and Eric's cavatina (Acts II. and III.) must be omitted. * * * *

209. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH], 20*th November*, 1851.

* * * What you have been to me, I have recently attempted to make known publicly—keeping the tone as sober as possible just because it was for the public—confining myself strictly to the bare facts of your relations with me, to present the picture of such a friendship as people nowadays, perhaps, can scarcely conceive. I did this * * in a *Communication to my Friends* with which I prefaced the publication of my *Three Poems*. * * * The timidity of the good Messrs. Härtel, the intending publishers of this edition, has now

[1] See No. 204, note 1 (p. 211).

taken alarm at certain passages in this "Foreword" wherein I had absolutely no demonstrative intention and which I could just as well have expressed differently, with the result that the appearance of the book is to be greatly retarded, a circumstance which I have at present special reasons for feeling very annoyed about. * *

Nevertheless I feel obliged now to tell you * * that my decision to write a new opera for Weimar has become subject to such important modifications that I can hardly let it still be counted as a decision. * * * *

It was in the autumn of 1848 that I first sketched out the whole Nibelungen myth in a form henceforward to be my own poetic property. My next attempt, to dramatise the chief tragic incident in the great story for our stage, was *Siegfried's Death.* After long hesitation, in the autumn of 1850 I was at last upon the point of making plans to execute the drama in musical form, but was prevented from beginning chiefly by renewed recognition of the fact that it could not possibly be produced satisfactorily anywhere. To rid myself of this despairing mood I wrote my book *Opera and Drama.* Then last spring you made so inspiriting an impression on me with your article on *Lohengrin* that—for your sake—I once again readily and joyfully resumed the composition of a drama. I wrote to you of it at the time. *Siegfried's Death,* however, * * was for the moment impossible. I saw that I should first have to prepare the way for it by another drama and therefore returned to a long-cherished plan of making "Young Siegfried" the subject of a poem. In this work, matters which in *Siegfried's Death* are partly related, partly assumed to be known, could be given in bold vivid contours by actual representation. The poem was quickly planned and finished.— * * *

Even *Young Siegfried,* however, is only a fragment and can never make a true and unequivocal impression as a *perfect part* until it is appropriately placed according to my present plan—*Siegfried's Death* rounding off the *perfect whole.* In both these dramas a great amount of relevant matter is left either to narrative—or even to the deductions of the audience. * * * But I am now deeply convinced that any work of art, including dramatic art, can only be truly effective if all that is of moment to the imaginative purpose is imparted to the senses; and now, least of all, can or may *I* sin against the truth as I perceive it. Therefore, to be completely understood, I must give the whole myth in all the depth and breadth of its meaning with the most absolute artistic precision. * * *

Accordingly it still remains for me to prepare for representation two principal incidents in my myth, and both of these are fore-

shadowed in *Young Siegfried*—the first in Brynhilde's long narrative after her awakening * *—the second in the scenes between Alberich and the Wanderer in the second act, and between the Wanderer and Mime in the first act.—If you look closely into the subject you will readily realise that I am impelled to choose these incidents, not only by artistic reflection but because of the splendour of the subjects and their uncommonly rich dramatic material. Think of the marvellous ill-starred love of Siegmund and Sieglinde; of Wotan and his deep mysterious connexion with that love, his estrangement from Fricka and his furious contest with himself when, for the law's sake, he decrees Siegmund's death! Then think of Brynhilde, the glorious valkyrie, who divining his inmost thought, defies the god and is punished by him. Picture all this wealth of interest (which I touch on in the scene between the Wanderer and the Wala and again—more at large—in the aforementioned narrative of Brynhilde) as the subject-matter of a drama preceding the two "Siegfrieds" and you will understand that it was no mere cold reflection but veritable inspiration which gave me this new plan of mine!

This plan comprises three dramas—(1) *The Valkyrie*, (2) *Young Siegfried*, (3) *Siegfried's Death*, but to make the subject complete another great play should precede them, *The Theft of the Rhinegold*. Its purpose is the complete representation of all the circumstances of the theft, the origin of the hoard of the Nibelungs, its seizure by Wotan, and Alberich's curse, which in *Young Siegfried* appear as narrative.— * * * *

I cannot contemplate the separation of the component parts of this great whole without wrecking my intention from the first. All the complex drama must be represented on the stage in rapid sequence, and to make this actually possible I can only presuppose favourable conditions as follows:—My "Nibelung" dramas must be produced at a great festival which is to be instituted, perhaps, just for the purpose of this performance. It must occupy three successive days, on the eve of which the introductory prologue is to be given. Having once achieved such a performance under these conditions, I would repeat the whole at the earliest opportunity, and thereafter the individual dramas, each in itself an independent piece, might be given separately at will. * * *

Where and under what circumstances such a performance may first be made possible, need not trouble me at present, for first I have to carry out my great work and this, if I am to have any regard for my health, will occupy me three years at least.

A fortunate accession of means in the Ritter family, who are

my good friends, has now made it possible for me to devote myself to creative art during this time, and indeed all my life, in peace of mind and undisturbed by material cares. * * * *

But I must now confess that simultaneously with my definite change of plan I feel myself relieved of a considerable embarrassment—the embarrassment of requiring the Weimar theatre in its present condition to present *Young Siegfried.*

I tell you with sad sincerity that I am forced to believe that all your efforts at Weimar are fruitless. You are discovering that you have but to turn your back there and you find utter baseness flourishing most luxuriantly in the very ground in which you had exerted yourself to plant noble seed. * * * I can see nothing around you but stupidity, short-sightedness, vulgarity, the empty arrogance of ambitious courtiers who are jealous, with very good cause, of every success of genius! * * * *

You know that I had decided to write a new work for *you* before any pecuniary agreement [1] was made between Ziegesar and myself, but the fact that there was an agreement, and that it was offered me by our friends with obvious joy and satisfaction, made me value the occasion very highly. This I have told him openly. I should think it rather petty, small-minded and in a sense insulting were I now to return the sum already received in pursuance of this agreement, for it was certainly not given to lay an "obligation" upon me—especially as regards you and Ziegesar, but with the kindly intention of relieving me as far as possible of household worries during the composition of my opera. All the same there is another aspect to this agreement, an aspect which stands out the more strongly in that Ziegesar has a successor—though but a temporary one [2]—in the management. As regards this successor I am, in any case, simply a man under obligation, and since I can no longer fulfil the commission I undertook, I must formally and in a monetary sense dissolve a contract which cannot stand henceforward. Fortunately enough for me, I have just been put in a position to save you all embarrassment on this point!— * * * *

210. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *30th January,* 1852.

* * * * As regards the performance of my "Nibelung" dramas I think you * * take a too happy view of my future. I do not count at all on their being performed—not, at least, in my lifetime—and

[1] The exact form of this agreement about *Young Siegfried* is unknown.
[2] Baron von Beaulieu took Ziegesar's place owing to the latter's eye trouble.

above all not in Berlin or Dresden. These and such-like great towns and their public are certainly not for me any more. As an audience I can only imagine an assembly of friends gathered together expressly for the purpose of seeing my work, preferably in some fair solitude —somewhere far from the smoke and pestilential industrial reek of our urban civilisation. As such a solitude I can picture Weimar, possibly, but certainly no larger town. * * * *

The Princess von Wittgenstein has cheered me with a very friendly letter [1] and I ask you to convey to her my warmest thanks for her kindness. The deep interest which she has accorded my *Lohengrin*, particularly at the last performance, is of inestimable value to me. I was especially struck by her intelligent comments on Ortrud's rôle, and her comparison of the merits of the former and present performers in this part. Your esteemed friend will see at once to which side *I* lean when I indicate my view of the character in the simple statement that Ortrud is a woman who—*does not know love*. Everything—a most terrible everything—is expressed in that sentence. Her nature is a political one. A politically-minded *man* is repugnant, a politically-minded *woman* is horrible—and it was this horrible thing that I had to portray. There *is* love in the woman, love of the past, of departed generations, the frightful insane pride of ancestry, which can only find actual present expression in hatred of all that lives. Such a love is ridiculous in a man, but in a woman it is terrible, because a woman—with her natural strong need of love—*must* love something, and pride of ancestry, the bias to the past, here grows to murderous fanaticism. We know no more appalling phenomena in history than political women. Therefore it is not jealousy of Elsa—on Friedrich's account perchance—that governs Ortrud, but the whole truth of her passion is revealed only in that scene in the second act when, after Elsa's disappearance from the terrace, she leaps upon the minster steps and calls upon her old, long-vanished gods. She is a reactionary, thinking alone of old things and therefore hostile—in the most ferocious sense of the word—to everything new. She would extirpate the world and nature to bring her outworn gods to life once more. But this is no obstinate morbid whim in Ortrud, for she gives herself to this passion with the whole force of a woman's longing for love, recently embittered, stunted and deprived of its object, and therefore she is *magnificently* terrible. There should accordingly be nothing in the least petty in her portrayal. There should be no chance of her seeming merely malicious or spiteful. Through every expression of her disdain

[1] Published in *Briefwechsel zwischen Wagner und Liszt* (Wagner–Liszt Correspondence), vol. i., p. 335.

and hate there should be visible the full force of a terrible madness, only to be assuaged by the annihilation of others—or herself. Whichever of the two actresses came nearest to this view of mine should therefore be held the better.— * * * *

211. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, WEIMAR

ZURICH, 30*th January*, 1852.

* * * * I do not wish actually to influence your conception of an overture to *Romeo and Juliet*,[1] but I would rather like to express a wish that before going farther you would read a dissertation on the *Coriolanus Overture* [2] which I have written for our public, for the better understanding of a performance of this composition, and which I shall soon send you in print. I was delighted to find that this entire piece of music is nothing else but the accompaniment to a dramatic—almost pantomimic—scene between Coriolanus and his mother in the camp before Rome. You should condense the whole poem of *Romeo and Juliet* into a similar dramatic moment. Straying farther and farther on the philosophic plane as you are doing, your music can only become more and more incomprehensible. For—once again—absolute music can only express feelings, passions and moods in their antitheses and intensities, it cannot express any kind of relationships of a political or social nature. Beethoven had a magnificent instinct for this. I almost prefer as an artistic conception *his* poem of Coriolanus with its dramatic unity and terseness, whereby the subject attains in a sense the objective nature of a myth, to the Shakespearian [3] poem. * * * *

212. TO THE SAME

[ZURICH], 15*th February*, 1852.

* * * * What do you mean by provoking me like this with your "architect"? Can't you see that all our plastic arts derive from architecture and are parts of the same? In the architect, simple human necessity (the need of a dwelling-place in the first instance) becomes the begetter of an artistic design, just as with the poet artistic intent grows out of the need of life. To carry out his intent the architect needs the aid of the sculptor and the painter to give his mathematical straight lines, angles and corners as far as possible the non-arbitrary formation of free nature. Nevertheless—but I

[1] Probably never completed; certainly never published.

[2] Written for Wagner's concert on 17 February, 1852 (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. v.).

[3] But Beethoven's overture was written for Heinrich von Collin's tragedy!

can't express my meaning so briefly. Only this much more—the architect is in immediate contact with life's necessities—the *architect* (the constructor of naked form) is the prime mover not only in the making of the house, but of every bench, table and chest. He is inspired finally to his *highest* artistic work by the *highest* of human needs, and that is the poetic. Here, then, he comes into immediate contact with the poet, but up till then he grows independently out of the soil of life. I know nothing of any absolutely independent architectural work of art, unconditioned either by the needs of ordinary life or by poetic needs, though King Ludwig of Bavaria may. Such a work of art can only be based on *imitation*, namely on the imitation of architectonic works of art which in other times and under other conditions answered to a real, if exaggerated and luxurious need. But the Greek temple was in its time an actual religious necessity to the Hellenes, and not less so were the churches of the Middle Ages, etc. All these arose out of what was almost an artistic necessity of their periods. In the future *we* shall only have the theatre instead, because our highest artistic need can no longer be of an ecclesiastically-religious, nor of a princely and luxurious, nature. I recognise no absolute work of art at all, and therefore no absolute work of architectural art.

Another time, spare me this sort of learned rubbish! — * * * *

213. TO THE SAME

[ZURICH], *4th March*, 1852.

* * * * I am not in the least troubled because you are discontented with your artistic productions. A certain amount of criticism must always play its part at each stage of our artistic development. Therefore I cannot see that the *severest* criticism can do any harm, nor that weak, superstitious and parasitical criticism can do any possible good to creative art. You will not indeed altogether forget criticism as you work, until you are impelled to production by the very life-force within you. Life, however, must be lived—and it still lies before you. So, do not get low-spirited. Contentment will come to you as soon as you cease to seek it in the sense in which you are bound to do now during your years of artistic apprenticeship and technical exercise!

Also do not envy Karl so much. If I am troubled for anyone I am troubled for Karl. He is incomparably farther than you from the living source of all content, from actual living. In his case I am continually asking myself, "When will he begin to become a living person?"— * * * *

214. TO HIS NIECE, FRANCISCA WAGNER, SCHWERIN

ZURICH (ZELTWEG), 21*st March*, 1852.

DEAR FRÄNZE,

* * * I was all the more delighted with your letter because I had long been expecting one, and on account of the long delay was beginning to be attacked by all kinds of doubts about you. I was already beginning to think I must class you with Johanna, who has gone so far in her childish obedience [1] to her parents that she practically ignores me entirely. Last summer she met Uhlig, the Dresden chamber-musician, on his return journey through Frankfort, after he had managed by painful economy to visit me here in Switzerland. He talked to her about me and she was overcome with shame and wanted to come the short journey to see me, but her mother held her back. I even wrote to her myself and otherwise reminded her that a letter from *her* would be very welcome to me. Mother and father, however, seem to think it would be difficult and lead to serious consequences if Johanna were to have anything to do with me. Underlying this anxiety is the consciousness of their whole position as regards me and the stirrings of an accusing conscience are very upsetting. But I wish they knew what injustice they do me if they are afraid I could ever be a burden to them. With those who feel as I do, I am as ready to take and as candid as a child, but with those who do not understand me and do not want to understand me I am terrifically proud. I am now living solely on the friendship of the Ritter family * *. I accept everything without shyness from friends so intimate, while I am so "difficult" with others that I returned even to Heinrich Brockhaus [2] a sum of money which he sent me. If your parents only knew that they need have no anxiety at all about me in this connexion, perhaps they would not continue to prevent Johanna from associating with me. What really horrifies me, however, is that Johanna can actually bring herself on *her* side to drop me! I do not expect much of men nowadays and I am surprised at nothing from these selfish Philistines, but the heart of a girl!—It is sad. Perhaps the tinsel that surrounds her is her excuse. Do not urge her to write to me! It is only the spontaneous and unforced that can give me any joy. Well, it is different with you and I hope it is not solely the modesty of your position which has preserved sound feeling in you; your good angel—as I believe—is your independence of spirit, your respect

[1] Wagner had quarrelled with his brother Albert and his wife. Cf. *My Life*, p. 524.

[2] Wagner was on bad terms with Fritz and Heinrich Brockhaus but was very friendly with his brother-in-law, Hermann Brockhaus.

for yourself and your own freedom. In you I seem to see the difference between the dramatic artist and the operatic singer, in whom the mechanical training of the vocal chords for modern sing-song stuff seems to have extended to heart and brain as well. * * * In you, on the contrary, what has been required is individual development from your own inner self, for a good actress must herself feel; she cannot merely imitate feeling. In my case too—as you know—mere "singers" have never been any use to me. I want good actresses who can sing, and while I cannot get them, the performance of my works will always be only a shadow. And here I must pass on to tell you about the Schwerin[1] production of *Tannhäuser*. It really pleased me greatly because it testified to the self-sacrificing enthusiasm which I am capable of arousing in some individuals. * * * That I whistle to the winds with my works of art, I know. * * * *

215. TO FRAU RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *4th April*, 1852.

If I have turned my back on the actual public once more, I have again found compensation in the joy of being able to take comfort from certain sympathetic individuals. Herwegh—pretty well the only man with whom I could possibly establish a full understanding—begged me urgently to perform the *Tannhäuser Overture* for him, and for his sake I overcame my disinclination to the enterprise, exerted myself to the utmost to overcome attendant difficulties and—with Herwegh in my mind all the time—brought off a performance which was a surprise to myself and pleased me uncommonly. It produced a tremendous sensation and hearts which had hitherto beat dully indifferent to me were suddenly taken by storm. Of course I refer more particularly to *women*,[2] for our business men cannot but seem ridiculous to me, whatever attitude they adopt. Accordingly, some friends of mine with whom I see eye to eye have now induced me to perform *The Flying Dutchman* for them, and I do not doubt but that—as with the aforementioned overture—I shall succeed with this performance also, for I have a real impulse to the undertaking and faith in it as well. Now, do you not think that my impulse would be strengthened and that my faith would grow if *you* were to be among those on whom my eye might light when I produce the work? Do you not think that, just as you would stimulate me delightfully, I could give you true delight if you would only come to us at last?

[1] 26 January, 1852.

[2] On 13 April he writes to Liszt that among his friends is "a charming woman" (Mathilde Wesendonck).

Frau Julie Ritter and her son Alexander

From "Alexander Ritter," by S. von Hausegger

I can create nothing when I have no one to whom I can and may impart it. And candidly, you have no one where you live who can impart to you what I am able to give—so you see we both go empty on account of our separation. If you were here I would and could give you many a joy of which, I say boldly, you have no idea. My performances of Beethoven's works succeed far better here than they ever did in the Dresden days, for here I already feel greater delight in *creation* than I did there. If now the little company of those who see eye to eye with me were to increase, my output would increase too, and I and others would be happy. But—we must be able to see eye to eye; the multitude does not exist for me!

Now, let me speak straight out—I could then at last be completely happy about my dependence on your kindness. You alone make my present work possible for me, for you alone have made it possible for me to create independently. With your help I need not work for money, and only thus can I work at all. For instance, it is only through you that I can produce *The Flying Dutchman* here, for because of you I am in a position to scorn any kind of honorarium and by so doing attain a status which makes such a production possible—the status of one completely independent and caring only for the matter itself. Do you suppose that this can continue if you remain far away from me? No, indeed! For I know that in the end you are *bound* to lose the requisite warmth of feeling for me. The sacrifices you make for me must, with time, assume increasingly the nature of a mere "honourable duty." Everything *loving* in our relationship will assuredly give place to a colder emotion—that of mere solicitude for me. Some day I shall have to *relinquish* you unless we can regularly revivify our relations by proximity.

Now for a piece of news that *I think important. I shall go in for no more hydropathic cures.*[1] I have come to the conclusion that, with my nerves in their present condition, the method of cure by waters is indeed the only one from which I can expect any good result, but that I must proceed with it so gently that I can only achieve the desired effect gradually and over a long period. The régime I need is therefore rather a purely dietetic one, and one which can be reconciled with mental exertion. I made a great mistake when I believed that I had to avoid mental effort of any sort! I—and all of us—are not children of nature any longer. The exercise of our mental powers in reasonable relation to those of our body is a necessary condition of life. To come to a full stop with the former is to bring ruin on the whole. I had recently become clear about this and it was confirmed for me moreover by a doctor in whom I have

[1] Wagner's stay at the hydro at Albisbrunn, in January 1851, had not suited him.

come to place full confidence—Dr. Karl Lindemann, at present in Paris. He is a deeply learned and cultured physician who has fully mastered both the theory and practice of the science of cure by water. He has personally investigated Rausse and his institution, fully recognises his genius, but knows too where he goes wrong and where new developments in the science should be adopted. * * * * —He has now drawn up a plan of cure for me (upon an exact account of my condition) with which I am in full agreement. In it he has laid down regular artistic work as a definite obligation upon me.

My chief object in telling you this is to influence Karl. I do not like giving him further advice and yet I would urge this last upon him. I implore Karl to get ready at once and go to Paris. There * * let him visit Lindemann, begin his cure in Paris under the doctor's very eyes, and then continue it wherever he likes. Karl is being inevitably ruined by this retired way of life and work of his. * * * *

216. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *13th April*, 1852.

* * * * I beg you to contradict most positively the rumour that I have petitioned for a pardon, because if it is disseminated as an accepted and established fact I shall be forced into a *public* explanation which I would willingly avoid on *every* consideration! * * * *

* * * We stabilised-sedentary animals don't really deserve to be men. What a good time we might have if we weren't always victimising our d——d bases! Oh! these organs of the seat are veritable taskmasters of the whole race of civilised mankind. We insist on sitting, or at the most standing, never will we walk and still less run. My hero now is the "bold runner, Achilles"! * * * *

217. TO LOUIS SCHINDELMEISSER, WIESBADEN

ZURICH, *6th May*, 1852.

* * * * You surprised me somewhat with your demand for *Tannhäuser*. I have become rather touchy in this respect, and would rather forgo the propagation of my operas unless I can feel assured of a performance in the right spirit. It is to be hoped, however, that you know and realise what you have to do with, and have in particular weighed the difficulties connected with the presentation, especially as regards the leading rôles. If you have a good hope of overcoming these difficulties, I shall be delighted to be able to rely once again on your friendly zeal. * * *

As regards the honorarium, I certainly prefer to receive some-

thing definite at once upon the sale of the score, the reason being that I have to fear the Saxon Treasury in receipts of this kind, as all my goods are forfeit to it (for high treason). * * * *

218. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, 16*th May*, 1852.

* * * * I admire the courage with which you tackle *Tannhäuser*. I know how little time we can get in our theatres and accordingly can only suppose that a practical fellow like yourself contrives to make the most of this little time.

It is to be hoped you know *Tannhäuser* and realise how much trouble and worry it will cost you, but if you are entering on the affair with full knowledge, if you understand the difficulties of the task you are undertaking and set about achieving a good result with a will * *, you will give me great joy and I shall be very grateful to you. Whether or no you have been observing me lately, you probably know this much of me, that in a certain sense the modern public no longer exists for me. Whether it gets to know me or not, whether it learns to love me or not, is a matter of comparative indifference to my innermost feelings. I am all the more pleased when I win *friends* for myself as I really am, and, few or many, if they are *real* friends their number is nothing to me. In my youth I called you friend. Life has divided us spatially—and perhaps spiritually too—one going one way, one another, and a vexatious rivalry, which I have never been clear about, once [1] made us almost enemies. Could I now succeed in doing consciously, what once occurred unconsciously—that is in making a friend of you—I should esteem it a double prize, for together with the *old* friend I should have made a *new* one. * * *

219. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, 29*th May*, 1852.

* * * * I had not as yet heard anything of the performance of the *Overture to Faust*,[2] apart from this short notice of yours. I cannot turn against this composition, even though there are some things in it here and there which would not flow from my pen to-day. The somewhat abundant brass, in particular, is no longer to my mind. If I were sure that Härtel's would give me something handsome for it, I should almost like to publish the full score with a pianoforte arrangement (which Hans would have to make).

[1] In 1836 Schindelmeisser got the post of kapellmeister to the Königstädtischen Theater in Berlin, for which Wagner had tried.

[2] See No. 136.

But I would rather this were duly suggested to me — I would not willingly undertake anything of the kind on my own sole initiative.— * * * *

Just send your score of *The Flying Dutchman* to Uhlig. He has the score *newly revised*[1] by me, and would have yours faithfully corrected by it. * * *

* * * I have now gone into the country[2] and feel tolerably happy. I enjoy working once more. I have a complete scenario ready of my whole *Nibelungen* tetralogy and the verse will be ready in a few months. From then on I shall become a "music-maker" and nothing else, for this work will probably be my last poem and it is to be hoped I shall never come to journalism again. I have nothing in my mind thereafter but plans for production. There is to be no more writing—only producing. I hope you will help me with it!! * * * *

220. TO LOUIS SCHINDELMEISSER, WIESBADEN

ZURICH, 30*th May*, 1852.

* * Your last letter made me very glad, although I was horrified at first to discover that you had not before very precisely grasped the difficulties of my *Tannhäuser*. * * * * Difficult as the conductor's task is, I would remind you that that of the stage-manager is no less so. Here, too, after all, the music ultimately counts for most—but its effect will not be the right one if it does not accord very closely with the action and the whole presentation, that is to say, if the action and presentation are not so arranged that the music appears to be fully justified and explained by them. If you will take the trouble, for example, to follow my orchestration closely, you will [not fail to bear] me witness that it contains no striking feature whatsoever which is not definitely connected with what is presented on the stage to the eye of the audience, whether this be the scene itself, an action, or even a mere gesture. The stage-manager must therefore get to know the score very thoroughly, and it is really best that the conductor [should also be the stage-manager and from the first acquaint the singers most exactly with all the meanings indicated in the score.

[1] On 6 August, 1852, Wagner wrote to Hans von Bülow at Weimar: "You are all making an increasing muddle of the *Dutchman* score and I hear that it will in the end have to be sent to Weimar *unadjusted*. Well, see that it is properly adjusted there. For this purpose there is available a newly revised score of the overture and of all the rest (with special reference to the brass, etc., of the Dresden score) which I have made and which Uhlig is to send. *Nothing must be written* till the variants of the Dresden score have been embodied in the Weimar score." See Nos. 208, 231.

[2] At the inn "Zum Rinderknecht" in the hills above Fluntern.

Speaking of the singers in particular, during rehearsals for my latest opera I found that if from the first I allowed them freedom in the singing of recitative passages they slipped back involuntarily into the old recitative manner, in which they dwell on certain notes, gallop, drawl or hurry others at will, and in that way the verisimilitude of my declamation is obliterated. On the other hand I made sure that—carrying the actual production in my mind's ear—I have indicated even the rhythm of the quasi-recitative exactly as most good singers would have worked it out for themselves from the old-fashioned recitative, and I now assert with conviction that my recitatives (if they are to be called so) can best be performed if they are sung exactly according to the value of the notes and in tempo.[1] * * * So let the singers *learn* them accurately, according to the value of the notes and in tempo, and when they have thereby made the right accentuation completely their own, then (and not *till* then) they can be left somewhat freer; and *then* I willingly agree that the conductor must go *with* the singer.

I would not wish you to make any further cuts, and this is really not from vanity but because I should be obliged to deduce therefrom that the performers were thought radically unequal to their task. For instance, if those who take the parts of Tannhäuser and Venus cannot present the psychological development in Act I. Scene i. with such truth that the scene holds and thrills the audience throughout, and if from the first there is so little hope of their being able to do so that it is felt necessary to shorten the scene, I tell you plainly that it would be better not to produce the opera at all, until these doubts are overcome and reliable performers found. Only in case of extreme need, and then most unwillingly, would I consent that Tannhäuser should sing the first verse of his song in D major (instead of D flat major) and then (after the second verse) continue in D minor. * * *

You will soon discover one thing * * that this opera particularly can only be effective and successful when it is effective and successful in *quite another sense* than is the case with the ordinary opera. Even little places (like Weimar and Schwerin) have, however, taught me that what I wish is possible. * * * *

221. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH], 16*th June*, 1852.

* * * I am working industriously, and think I shall have finished the poem of my *Valkyrie* in a fortnight. Then I absolutely must

[1] See No. 184.

have a holiday. I need the recreation of travel, and also I would very much rather not finish my last big poetic work here, where the monotony of the familiar environment oppresses me and where I am so often thrown into a bad mood by tiresome visits. I must get into the Alps and I would like at least to nibble at the frontiers of Italy and stay there for a little. But I cannot afford such extravagances out of my ordinary income. * * * *

My *Valkyrie* (first drama) is turning out awfully beautiful! Even before the end of the summer I hope to be able to lay the *entire* poem of the tetralogy before you. I shall be able to polish off the music very quickly and easily, for it is only the *carrying out* of what is *complete* already. * * * *

222. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *7th August*, 1852.

* * * * My nerves and mind were so badly affected that I found myself (others, naturally, do not perceive it at all) in a very comfortless condition. * * * The chief thing is to keep an iron hand over myself, to force myself to break off work promptly and frequently, and to wean my nerves and brain from a suicidal tendency by vigorous walks. I had great hopes of a happy restoration to health by means of a fairly long journey, and the very thought of being able even to nibble at the frontiers of *Italy* had a wonderfully reviving effect on me to start with. But—this journey has completely opened my eyes about myself and its effect upon me has robbed me of my last illusions. True, I cannot deny that the entrance into Italy really enchanted me, but I can no longer conceal from myself the realisation that for me—there is no more joy in life. It was there that I found that I am no longer capable of lighthearted joy in living—my youth is gone. Yes, dear friend, till a certain event [1] in my life, well known to you, I was still young—it was then that at a single stroke I became old, and I remain so. * * *

I am an artist though, and so I will carry on my artistic life as long as may be. Naturally it is my art alone which still has power to support me and disguise from me the insipidity of my life. I must try as well as I can to ease the great strain of the effort this costs me. The most important factor in this is to spare myself the wretchedness of over-frequent contact with foolish people. I think now I have discovered the surest device for self-preservation, in a little house with a little garden, far off on the lake. It almost seems as if this last wish bearing on the conditions of my life, were to be fulfilled. The German theatres are gradually taking up my operas and the

[1] Jessie Laussot; see No. 176.

latest is that the King of Prussia himself wants *Tannhäuser* performed for his birthday. Very likely nothing will come of this, for I have taken the liberty of making very large demands [1] on Berlin. Yet it looks now as if—while you remain faithful to me—I might still contemplate the fulfilment of this one darling wish of my life.

Your daughter Julia has won my sincerest interest. She is full of understanding and sensibility and there is no doubt she only lacks the right husband to bring her beautiful disposition to the happiest perfection. I can only regard her connexion with [Otto] Kummer [2] * * * as a great misfortune. The last news your daughter sent us about Otto's condition was not reassuring and my own hopes for his health are not great. It is *very* sad! * * * *

223. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *8th September*, 1852.

* * * * To speak frankly, I am sorry that Berlioz still will, or must, undertake the recasting of his *Cellini*! If I am not mistaken, the work is over twelve years old. Has Berlioz not developed since then, so that he might make something quite different? What a miserable lack of confidence in himself, to have to go back on an earlier work! Bülow [3] has quite rightly demonstrated the weakness of *Cellini*—it is the *poem*. * * * Berlioz will never, never do any good with this *Cellini*. But which is the most important—*Cellini*—or Berlioz? Let the first go, then, and assist the second! There is something horrible to me in witnessing this attempt at galvanising the dead into life! For heaven's sake let Berlioz only set about writing a *new opera*! It will be his greatest disaster if he fails to do so, for there is but one thing that can save him—drama, and there is but one thing that can bring him to even deeper ruin—his *obstinate* avoidance of this *only right way out*—and this obstinacy will only be strengthened by this taking up of an old attempt in which it was just the *dramatist* who got him into the difficulties which he is always struggling to overcome by his music.

Believe me I *love* Berlioz, even though he obstinately and mistrustfully keeps his distance from me. He does not know *me* but I know *him*. If I expect anything of anybody I expect it of Berlioz, but not on the road which brought him to the errors of taste of his *Faust Sympathy*,[4] for if he goes farther that way he can only

[1] Cf. W. Altmann's "Richard Wagner und die Berliner Generalintendantur" (Richard Wagner and the Management in Berlin) in *Die Musik*, vol. vii. (Berlin, 1903).

[2] This flautist in the Dresden Court Orchestra was highly neurotic.

[3] *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, vol. xxxvi. (1852). Bülow: *Briefe und Schriften* (Letters and Papers), vol. iii., p. 61 (2nd ed., Leipzig, 1911).

[4] *La Damnation de Faust, Légende dramatique.*

become totally ridiculous. If any musician needs a poet, Berlioz does; and his misfortune is that he is always arranging his poet to suit his musical whims, and distorting now Shakespeare, now Goethe at will. He needs a poet who can fulfil his being, who can *constrain* him for very rapture, who can be to him what Man is to Woman. It is with dismay that I see this immeasurably gifted artist wrecked on the rock of egotistic isolation. Can I perhaps help him??

You do not want *Wieland.*[1] I consider it a beautiful poem but, for myself, I *cannot* execute it now. Will you offer it to Berlioz? Perhaps Henri Blaze would be the man to translate it into French?—

And now, what about Raff? I thought he was engaged on a new work, but no, he is adapting an old one[2]! Are these men not *alive*? How can an artist create if not out of the stuff of *life,* and of what artistically-productive import is life if it does not impel the artist to ever fresh creations expressive of life? Can this artificial work upon dead-and-gone impulses be called creative art? What can have become of the *fount of all art* if the New does not gush forth irresistibly, or even exhaust itself utterly, in *new* creations? O ye people of God, never mistake this *manufacture* for Art! What self-complaisance, combined with how much poverty of spirit, is betrayed by this desire to retouch old experiments! If Raff's opera pleased, as you tell me it did, he should be content; and in any case he was better rewarded than I for my *Feen,* which I never got performed, or for my *Liebesverbot,*[3] which was performed *once* abominably, or for my *Rienzi,* the revival of which is so little in my mind that I would not even give my consent [4] to it if it were suggested anywhere. It is only unwillingly that I concern myself with *The Flying Dutchman, Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin,* and then only because I know that, the performances having been imperfect, they are still imperfectly understood. If they had been properly done anywhere, the devil another question would I ask about things which I have passed beyond.

My children, make *new* things, *new* things and again *new* things! If ye cling to what is old, the devil of unproductivity has you and ye are the most miserable of artists!

Well, this was from the heart! Whosoever accuses me of insincerity must answer for it to God—but whosoever accuses me of arrogance is a fool!— * * * *

[1] See No. 196, note 3.
[2] *King Alfred.*
[3] *The Ban on Love.*
[4] He changed his mind later—for pecuniary reasons.

224. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *12th September*, 1852.

* * * * Be kind enough to send me two things—(1) My *Faust Overture*. * * * I feel I want to revise it a little and have it published [1] by Härtel's. * * * (2) My introduction to the performance of *Lohengrin*, which I sent you in letter [2] form from Thun in the summer of 1850. I set special store by my beautiful original drawings of the scenery. * * * *

When are you going to send me something of your composition? I cannot get a sight of any of it here, and, indeed, hear practically nothing of music in general. Think of me some time! * * * *

225. TO AUGUST RÖCKEL, WALDHEIM IN SAXONY

ZURICH, *12th September*, 1852.

* * * My health is not of the best. * * * In particular, this everlasting life of the imagination, without any satisfying reality, is so injurious to my mind and nerves that I dare only work with lengthy pauses and at long intervals if I am to avoid falling into a permanently invalid condition. It was in such a condition that your last letter found me. Its contents, taken together with your situation, formed a fairly striking contrast to my circumstances and my mood. It only convinced me of what I have often been made to feel, that a half-and-half freedom is more discouraging and oppressive than complete subjection. * * * My journalistic works were witnesses to my lack of freedom as an artist. I only planned them under great pressure and had nothing less in mind than the writing of "books." Had it been otherwise you would probably not have had to complain so much of my style. But my journalistic period is over now. It would assuredly kill me if I were to continue it. Instead, I am now carrying out a big artistic scheme,—the completion of the versification of three dramas with a big separate prelude which I shall next set to music and produce some day—God knows when, where and how. The whole will be called *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. * * * I am thinking of putting the poem before my friends in print some time at the end of this year. My health being what it is now, it will naturally take time to carry out the whole, and for the present I must put the date of performance in a fabulous "future."— * * *

When you are again allowed to occupy yourself with literature I should like you to tell me if I may send you books from time to time. You would find Feuerbach's works uncommonly stimulating reading and I should like to introduce you to a poet whom I have

[1] See below, No. 273.

[2] See No. 179, note 1, p. 185.

recently recognised as the greatest of all poets, the Persian poet Hafiz, of whom there is now a very enjoyable German version by Daumer. Having got to know this poet, I am really appalled by the poor appearance we make with our pompous European intellectual culture, compared with what the East has produced in such security, exaltation, joy and peace of the spirit. You would probably share my amazement. *World disintegration* is the only good thing I can see in recent European developments, whereas I should like to regard the phenomenon of this oriental writer as showing a way for the individual, though the time is not yet. * * *

226. TO ROBERT FRANZ, HALLE-AN-DER-SAALE [1]

ZURICH, *25th September*, 1852.

DEAR FRIEND,

You will certainly realise what joy your letter has given me when you think of my situation, which places all my joys at a distance and never close at hand. I am so dependent on someone's caring about me, that now I can only receive happy and encouraging impressions as by some fortunate chance. Such a chance it was which brought me you, when I could least of all expect a *musician* suddenly to accord me notice. I cannot possibly describe to you the impression you made upon me at that time. I became a new man through you. Really it is largely your fault that I have not yet abandoned art, and I scarcely know whether to thank you for it! My broken health makes me long so greatly for *life*—not just for length of days simply—but for a short (oh, so willingly short!) but a *healthy* life. I am forced to see that I can only recover my health now by abandoning my suicidal attitude to our modern art together with my artistic activities as a whole. Since I cannot delude myself with mere appearances, since I can no longer seek fame or "recognition" in art, but simply the satisfaction of a need which life denies me—the need of *love*—so, too, I can no longer cheat myself into believing that, under conditions of public art which are a true reflection of my love-denying life, this need can be satisfied even approximately. Experiences such as the acquisition of your friendship really do no more than conduce to fresh disorders. For what else can our intercourse be but the mutual communication of our similar dissatisfaction? Verily, I must think myself happy now to find friends who share my feelings sincerely, however comfortless the world about us! For it troubles me greatly to see that most of the dissatisfaction felt is dissatisfaction only with the externals of

[1] Published in *Zeitschrift für Musik*, 1924, p. 240.

our life as artists—and most of the friends I meet are like that—while all I really care for and desire is to be the reformer of opera! But when two meet, such as we, who value art only as the expression of life, we confess a mutual cause of complaint and bewail a situation common to both, yet which is the only one we care to be in as it is the most righteous.—So there we remain, at the theoretical stage, and cannot get beyond it. Even our actual works of art can only call up theoretical vision, since in the end we must always be wrecked upon the impossibility of successful presentation of our work. And when we consider, furthermore, that even this (impossible!) satisfactory presentation of the work of art would still be no more than an attempt to express the unsatisfied need of life, we are forced to admit that a full realisation of the situation can only lead to madness!

If there were such a thing as a will capable of overruling the necessity of one's own being, I should assuredly will *not* to be an artist any longer; and how I long to be able to forget all about art and have done with feeling life a perpetual burden! Unhappily, though, there is no way of escape for me, and anything I could do to flee from art would be more artificial than art itself. When you see me staggering on under my burden, though, don't imagine I see before me a clear goal, to reach which I do this or that—to bring this or that within my grasp. It all goes on involuntarily, simply because I *must*.

As you see, * * I am drowning in theory again, which is all the more foolish as I know no reason why I should tell you what your clear brain has undoubtedly perceived for itself already. To add something practical, I can do nothing better than express the wish that you should contrive to visit me in Switzerland next summer with Uhlig. * * *

The performances of my *Tannhäuser*, about to take place now in Germany, are really of very trivial value to me. They will be horribly badly done, of that I am sure, and the result will be that some things will please, as some things will displease, through sheer misunderstanding. No one will enjoy them intelligently, and I laugh beforehand at both success and failure. If you read my demands upon the performers [1] you will realise that I can expect no *true* success anywhere.—

Now then, after you have received these melancholy outpourings, let me end by thanking you with all my heart for the gift of your friendship, and rest assured that if we can be any help to each other,

[1] *Über die Aufführung des "Tannhäuser"* (On the Performance of *Tannhäuser*). Written in 1852 and sent to the theatres in pamphlet form, with practically no result (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. v.).

it is thus. But go on with your good work and send me—do not be horrified!—your *Songs* and do write again very soon. Chiefly, however, think over an early journey to Switzerland! * * *

227. TO HIS NIECE, FRANCISCA WAGNER, SCHWERIN

ZURICH, *28th September*, 1852.

* * Would you some time give me exact information as to whether Johanna has already concluded a contract with Paris * * and if so *when* she enters upon it? In case she has not yet absolutely concluded it, tell me if you think she could be induced to insist on the insertion of a clause in the proposed contract to the effect that she makes it a condition to appear under certain circumstances in *Tannhäuser*, among other things, in Paris? It is like this. Through Meyerbeer's stupidity (he having recently written a host of scribblings to decry me in Paris) I have suddenly become famous, or at any rate a matter of great interest there. It is now being hinted to me in that quarter that they are setting about offering me a contract to write an opera for Paris. I will not and I cannot hear of this, as the very last thing I will do is to compose on foreign libretti, least of all in the French language. On the other hand I cannot have the same objection to letting them have *Tannhäuser* well translated and produced at the Grand Opera, once I am assured of a *good performance*. This really is a possibility with Roger as Tannhäuser and Johanna. Roger would make the most charming Tannhäuser in the world, far better than * * Tichatschek for instance. In the first place I am attracted by the idea of a good production, while the prospect of a terrific but also great and uncommonly effective fight with Meyerbeer arouses my—shall we call it—naughty temper. Besides, an absorbing activity, connected with an immediate and interesting performance, ought to be very good for my health, which in my present situation is rapidly approaching complete breakdown. This, then, is a matter in which Johanna's action may be *decisive* if she takes the lists with *vigour* on my behalf and really frees herself from her state of subjection to Meyerbeer (Paris). * * *

228. TO FRANZ LISZT, PARIS

ZURICH, *3rd October*, 1852.

* * * * Belloni is now here, as you know. He talked much of Paris to me again and I find to my amazement that you still have plans of world conquest for me in your head! Oh, you indefatigable

man! To be sure, I should have nothing to advance against a translation of *Tannhäuser* * *—I admit it would not be a bad thing. Herwegh, too, is working upon me in favour of this Paris scheme. He wants to prepare a (very colourful) prose translation of the poem. Well, I cannot think seriously of it as yet!—

My "Preface to the Production of *Tannhäuser*" [1] has already made the Leipzigers abandon the opera—a very discreet sign of the recognition of ill-will. On the other hand, I am glad that Schindelmeisser in Wiesbaden has recommenced the study of my opera from the beginning after reading my pamphlet.— * * * *

229. TO HIS NIECE, FRANCISCA WAGNER, SCHWERIN

ZURICH, *13th October*, 1852.

* * * * —Do not let the circumstance of my recent request be a worry to you! I am not so serious as all that about Paris, and whether anything comes of the matter there or not is *in itself* pretty well indifferent to me. For Heaven's sake don't imagine I am striving for fame and honour. If I have any object as regards my opera, it is simply that I desire the possibility of a good performance, purely as a matter of artistic interest. To be plain, your father has other views for Johanna and even you have so far forgotten yourself as to talk of the "good" of his children being his one thought. A little while ago Albert wrote to me unasked on the subject of Johanna's Parisian contract and of how it all hung on Meyerbeer. I wrote to him very hotly of my distress that Johanna of all people, so near my heart as she is, should have been obliged to sell herself to that avaricious Jew. She might well have found nobler employment for the strength of her youth than this sacrificing of herself to that mouldering skeleton! If Hans [2] really loves me so, can she find satisfaction in what is, in a sense, a flat betrayal of me? Yes, but this "good"! It just means more money and more fame, doesn't it? Oh, come now, with your "good"! It's true Johanna has not enough yet, but could she not achieve the very highest fame by serving a *noble* cause? It would be a very good thing for me if *Lohengrin* were to be given in Berlin next winter. Everything inclines that way, only Johanna—for whom I wrote Elsa—blacks her face and brings Meyerbeer's *African* into the world [3]—all for the sake of her "good." But who knows whether *I* shall still survive the year after, and I would certainly not have allowed *Lohengrin*

[1] See No. 226, note 1, p. 233.

[2] Wagner frequently called his niece Johanna so.

[3] On the contrary, *The African Woman*, the child of Meyerbeer's sorrow, was not performed till after his death.

to be given elsewhere *before* Berlin. Enough—nothing grieves me, wounds me and hurts me so much as when those I love are untrue to me!— * * *

* * * I cannot endure men and won't have anything to do with them. Not one of them is worth a snap of the fingers, unless some woman can love him truly. The stupid donkeys cannot even love. If they have brains they take to drink; the common run make do with cigar smoke. It is only women who are any use to me now —if only there were more of them!

No one has any courage—everything's gone to wrack and ruin! —Ah well—do *you* make a better job of it; I expect it of you!— * * * *

230. TO MESSRS. BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

ZURICH, *28th October*, 1852.

* * * I have been not inappropriately admonished in several quarters to make public my arrangement of Gluck's *Iphigenia in Aulis*. I have duly completed this arrangement for the Dresden Court Theatre [1]; having first altered the text in the most important passages, and having then cut out the French affectations, I brought the principal scenes into close association with each other, and did away with old-fashioned trimmings; on the other hand I put what is essential and really beautiful in the most favourable light, uniting the broken separate pieces by a dramatically conceived ritornelle, and lastly I substituted for the old trivial finish a quite new close in the spirit of the Euripidean "Iphigenia." I revised the instrumentation and the accompaniment with the greatest care, and I freshly composed bridge passages, certain closes and even, in Act III., an important incident in the action of the *Iphigenia*. In making this adaptation my object was to give back to the modern stage this opera of Gluck, now almost forgotten on the boards (for when an *Iphigenia* by Gluck is given, it is nearly always the *Iphigenia in Tauris*), not simply as a curio to interest the expert in classical music * *, but as a real popular success, to be felt and admitted by everyone. This object I attained completely. * * *

What I now offer you for publication is a full pianoforte arrangement of the opera, to be completed by Herr Uhlig or Herr von Bülow [2] to my satisfaction; this being comparatively small in bulk would not put you to great expense. You would have to let me prepare a copy of the score (the original of which is in the possession of the Dresden Court Theatre) to be sent in case of demand to the

[1] First performance, 22 February, 1847.

[2] The latter did not make the pianoforte arrangement till 1858.

theatres (without further payment to me). Perhaps, however, it would be a good thing to have lithographed copies made. * * * I have noticed how quickly we come to an end with so-called classical operas when proposals have to be made to well-disposed theatres, and an extension in this direction would certainly be very desirable.—I would require twenty-five louis d'or as honorarium for myself, for which sum the score would become your absolute property. * * * *

I have still to write to you about my *Faust Overture*. I think —and my friends are of the same opinion—that it is one of my best purely musical compositions. Formerly, being pre-occupied with opera, I attached little importance to the work and had almost forgotten it. Liszt has brought it to the light of day with great effect, and if I am to make myself known to the concert-going German public I could not, in my opinion, recommend myself better than by means of this composition which I would again thoroughly revise for purposes of publication. I could only decide upon this revision, however, if I knew that it had been accepted by a good publisher willing to pay a good price, and accordingly I now ask whether you would care to publish [1] and what sum you could pay me. I would see to getting a very good pianoforte arrangement through Bülow. * * *

231. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *9th November*, 1852.

* * * * Day by day I go from bad to worse. I am leading an *indescribably worthless* existence! Of true delight in life I know nothing at all * * *; it is only as the "artist" that I can still live on, and in him my whole "man" is swallowed up. And just look at the environment in which I, as an artist, am living now!! Do you know Zurich?? I shall *assuredly* go mad here—nothing else is possible! I might still find a respite were Germany open to me again. * * * Here, I am bound to come to ruin soon, and everything, everything will come *too late—too late*! A pretty state of things!——— * * * *

What's to be done now? Am I to supplicate the King of Saxony —or rather beg from those vermin his ministers? Am I to confess myself submissive and penitent? Who could expect *that* of me?! But is there not one among these princely personages who love my "works" who has enough sense of shame to perceive that it is unworthy, petty, mean and paltry to leave me in my present

[1] The publishers rejected both the *Iphigenia* and the *Faust Overture* which were first published in 1858 and 1855 respectively.

position, and who would accordingly undertake the trouble of extracting permission for my return to Germany, from the thankless royal couple of Saxony, without exacting abasement on my part? It seems there is not. No one has the slightest sense of shame now, least of all our art-loving princes.——————————————————

——————————————————————————————

You, the best and dearest friend I have, you who are my prince and world and all in one, have pity on me!—

But softly, softly!—

I want to write to you about the *Faust Overture*. You triumphantly detected me in a lie when I sought to hoax myself into thinking I had written an overture to *Faust*! You felt quite rightly what was wanting in it—it is *Woman* that is lacking!—But perhaps you would leap to an understanding of my tone-poem if I were to call it *Faust in Solitude*!—

At the time I intended to write an entire *Faust Symphony*. The first part (the finished one) was just "Faust alone," longing, despairing, cursing. The "Feminine" floats before him merely as the image of his own desires but not in all its divine reality, and it is just this unsatisfying image of desire that he breaks to pieces in desperation. Not till the second movement was Gretchen—the Woman—to appear. I had already got the theme for her—but it was only a theme—I dropped the whole thing—and I wrote my *Flying Dutchman*. There you have the whole explanation! If some last remnant of weakness and vanity makes me want to see the *Faust* composition not utterly wasted, I shall certainly have some remodelling to do, but only in the sphere of instrumental modulation; the theme you want [1] cannot possibly be introduced; it would demand an entirely new composition which I have no desire to make. If I publish it I will, however, give it a proper title, *Faust in Solitude*, or *The Lonely Faust*—a "tone-poem" for the orchestra.—

Last week I finished my new poems for the two *Siegfrieds*, but I must revise the two older pieces, *Young Siegfried* and *Siegfried's Death*, as considerable alterations have now become necessary. I shall not be quite finished before the end of the year. The full title is *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. * * * —What is to be the fate of this poem, the poem of my life and all that I am and feel, I cannot yet decide. But one thing is certain—if Germany is not very soon to be open to me again and if I am to be forced to continue my life as an artist without nourishment or stimulus, my mere animal instinct to live will drive me to *abandon all art*. What I shall do

[1] Cf. Liszt's letter of 7 October, 1852, and Nos. 272, 273.

then to keep body and soul together I don't know, but—I shall not make the music of the *Nibelungs* and it would be inhuman to expect me to go on being the bond-slave of my art any longer.— * * * *

232. TO ROBERT FRANZ, HALLE-AN-DER-SAALE [1]

ZURICH, *18th December*, 1852.

* * * * I am now in an indescribable passion of work. These last days I have been mad to finish my big *Nibelung* drama, and yesterday I did finish it completely. But you ought to know what I mean by "working" nowadays. My nerves are so upset that if I work two hours before midday, I have to spend all the rest of the day and night carefully recovering from these two tempestuous hours in order to fit myself for another two hours' work on the next day. I have to fear, and avoid, the least effort or excitement; I dare not read nor do anything else to excite my brain. Often when I have had to answer a business letter shortly I have paid for the overstrain to the utmost.—Under such circumstances I have barely nibbled at your *Songs*, but even this nibbling has filled me with such hope of refreshing delights that I have promised myself with full solemnity to begin my new career as a musician (now imminent,—for I have *only* the music of my *Nibelung* dramas to make now) by bathing in your copious brooks of song, whereby I may become again a musician indeed.

To-day I am going for a few days to a family of friends in the country for a change. After that I still have to write troublesome, and to me tormenting, introductions [2] to the performance of *The Flying Dutchman* and *Lohengrin* (which is also to be given now), but when this is done I hope to be *free* and you shall baptise me a musician once more. Then shall I be able to thank you properly! * * *

233. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *29th December*, 1852.

* * * * Having conceived the idea of using the problematic profits on my operas to carry out a long-cherished wish of mine, the purchase of a small piece of land, I had consequently to ask you about your dear family's intentions with regard to the income assigned

[1] Published in *Zeitschrift für Musik*, 1924, p. 242.

[2] Though *Bemerkungen zur Aufführung der Oper, "Der Fliegende Holländer"* (Notes on the Performance of *The Flying Dutchman*), 22 December, 1852 (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol v.), was signed and sent to the theatres, there are no corresponding instructions for *Lohengrin* (see No. 179, note 1, p. 185); but a scenario of this work was published, see No. 242.

to me—whether you intended to support me thereby for a time only, or for as long as I lived and your means remained the same—since I could of course contemplate using my takings from the theatres for the purpose indicated only upon the latter hypothesis. The answer sounded reassuring, but since then my other hopes have so dwindled that I have almost been obliged to abandon my project entirely, even though Wesendonck, a young and wealthy merchant living here and friendly to me, has offered most kindly and almost unasked to advance the necessary money to purchase the plot. I feel too keenly that the acceptance of such an offer would place me in the horrible position of having to press for the performance of my operas at all costs and of forfeiting the right, so necessary to me, of complying with the *wishes and demands* of the theatres only where I am able to foresee a good result in *my sense* of the word. Moreover things are not moving nearly so quickly here as they seemed likely to do at first, and I think I do well to be equally prepared, either for complete silence on the part of the theatres, or for a possibly more urgent demand. Under such conditions I feel more strongly than ever the value of your family's bounty, for it is this income alone which preserves my freedom and as much happiness as possible in my undertakings. Please be assured once again that I regard your care for me as the greatest benefit that I have ever experienced in my life.

As to the other circumstances of my life—let me be silent. I live in an environment which forces me—the most communicative of men—constantly to crush back every instinct of communication into my innermost heart. Without outward relief, I am driven to feed on myself, to surrender myself wholly to the allurements of my own painfully over-stimulated artist's soul. No wonder that I am not particularly well. * * * *

234. TO HIS SISTER, CECILIE AVENARIUS, LEIPZIG

ZURICH, *30th December*, 1852.

* * * * It is a particular misfortune for me that I have scarcely any but Philistines for friends, and since their love for me is of a kind which really has nothing to do with my true personality I can only return it with a certain dishonesty. On the whole, most men are repellent to me and women oftener impress me happily. It is a monstrous piece of folly that men are always associating with men and women with women; the whole race of mankind is bound to be ruined in the end by this perversity. If only the majority of women were not so spoiled already! The men nowadays are born

Philistines and the women become so through them. Well, so it is! —I live a regular dog's life here. Illusions about friends, to which I intentionally give myself up with a will, do not, after all, last long; in the end the effort to preserve the illusion hurts me and I am forced at last to let these relationships appear in naked verity as they really are. So I go on living in the old loneliness, but in the end I shall succumb to this heart starvation. I am very neurotic, and after many attempts at a radical cure have no further hopes of recovery. All I can do is to get as much rest and ease as possible so as to continue to hold out. It is my work alone which keeps me going, but my brain is already in such a bad way that I can never work more than two hours a day and I can only manage this if I lie down another two hours after work and perhaps get off to sleep a little. If I cannot sleep my whole day is done for. Well, I have finished my great *Nibelung* drama now; and if I can get some outside stimulus I shall begin on the music for it in the spring. * * * *

235. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *8th January*, 1853.

* * Were not the overture and close of the last finale in your copy of *The Flying Dutchman* corrected by a score *specially revised* by myself last year[1]? In particular I entirely altered the instrumentation of the closing movement of the overture. Last year I sent the score containing this alteration to Uhlig, who wrote that he had sent it to you at Weimar together with a second score (which contained the revision of the rest of the instrumentation). * * * *

236. TO FRAU UHLIG, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *9th January*, 1853.

Poor dear lady! How can I possibly give you any kind of comfort in the terrible loss[2] you have suffered, seeing that it has hit me too so hard that even now I can scarcely realise its magnitude! The loss of this friend of all my friends will be irreplacable all my life—I see myself robbed indeed of half my own soul! What he was to me you no doubt know, and I have not to tell *you* what I must feel at his death! I am, too, quite incapable at present of pouring myself out about it!!

But I contemplate *your* loss—and at once my strongest feeling is the longing for a hint from you as to how I can testify my sympathy. If you have any wish in the fulfilment of which I might be of assistance to you, I beseech you to tell it me.

[1] See No. 219. [2] Theodore Uhlig died 3 January, 1853.

What will become of the little ones—of my little godson Siegfried? Oh, if I could see the children, if I could take a father's place —at least to one of them!—When you come to make any decision about your and their future, I conjure you to take *me* into account too. If you do so you may always rest assured that you are acting according to the wishes of my departed friend!! * * * *

237. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, 11*th February*, 1853.

* * Here you have a whole heap of new stuff from me! You see that my [*Nibelung*] poem is finished and if it is not yet set to music, still, the type has been set up and it has been printed,[1] at my own expense—a few copies only, which I wish to present to my friends, so that if I die while finishing the work they may possess my last will and testament in advance. Anyone knowing my situation would, in view of this costly edition, be certain to think this another of my extravagances. Be it so! The ordinary world is so stingy towards me that it induces no desire in me to imitate it.—

Well then—with a kind of fearful pleasure, and secretly (lest I should be prevented by admonitions), I have had the thing printed —you will find its drift more closely indicated in a prefatory note —and had only a few copies made, of which I send you forthwith a consignment with the request that you will do as follows. Of the three *de luxe* bound copies I want you to take the first as a gift from me. The second I intend as a birthday present for the Grand Duchess. * * * —The third I assign to the Princess of Prussia, with my very warmest greetings, too! I love her.— * * * *

As to the poem itself, I may not and cannot say anything more to you at present. If you find time to read it through sympathetically, you will say to yourself all that I could possibly tell you. I—shall never write any poetry again.—

However, I am greatly excited by the prospect before me now of setting all this to music. As regards the form, this is already complete in my mind and I was never so at one with myself about the musical execution of any poem as I am about this. All I need is the requisite *incentive in life* to bring me to that indispensable mood of serenity in which the motives will well up in me spontaneously and joyfully.— * * * *

How long I can go on in this horrible joylessness I do not know! —In the middle of last month I nearly succumbed and I thought then—that I should soon have to follow my poor Uhlig.—

[1] A facsimile of this exceedingly rare first edition was published in Berlin in 1920. See No. 249.

I was persuaded to go to a doctor [Dr. Rahn-Escher]. He is a most careful, prudent and learned man and is now giving me drastic treatment. He visits me almost every other day and I cannot help approving his prescriptions. One thing is clear—it won't be *his* fault if I—do not recover. My position is one of unendurable famine. My circle of friends has withered about me, and I am fated to survive and yet forgo everything. I languish in a desert, eat out my heart and therefore *must* perish! Someone will be sorry for it one day—perhaps even the King of Saxony! * * * *

Yes—I would fain perish in the flames of Walhalla! Mark my new poem well—it holds the world's beginning, and its destruction!—

The next thing for me to do is to compose it for the Jews of Frankfort and Leipzig—it is just made for them!— * * * *

238. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *3rd March*, 1853.

* * * * To-morrow — with appropriate leisureliness and composure—I am going to write you the "diplomatic letter." You shall be satisfied with it from every point of view, although I assure you it costs me a hard struggle to achieve the right attitude from which to view the offer [1] of the Duke [Ernest II. of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha] not as inconsiderate and cruelly insulting but * * as, at bottom, well-meaning, even though unacceptable under any conditions. I am vividly reminded of a time, thirteen years ago, when I arranged Donizetti's *Favourite* for two *cornets à piston*, etc., for Schlesinger in Paris. I hope I have at least got the better of the world to the extent of not being expected to submit to any similar outrage—for money's sake—again.— * * * *

239. TO FRAU UHLIG, DRESDEN [2]

ZURICH, *17th March*, 1853.

* * *—Since the news of the death of my dear friend I have been very—very ill. I almost thought I should soon follow him. I am still for the most part very unwell. Everything still seems like an incredible, horrible dream and there are moments when I cannot abandon the thought that Theodore will visit me this summer. I am yet far from growing accustomed to do without so dear a being! I feel orphaned. To whom can I now say all those things for which I knew there would be a sympathetic response in the heart of my friend?—

And how can I now prove to you my gratitude for all that I owe

[1] The duke had invited him to orchestrate his (the duke's) latest opera.

[2] *An Freunde*, p. 117.

to your splendid husband? * * * How can I befriend our little Siegfried? I have reserved the copy of my new *Nibelungen* poem intended for Theodore for the little one.

I yearn for the time when I shall see your children and I may be allowed to take an active share in their upbringing.

And now please get Herr Rühlemann * * to give me accurate news of yourself and your circumstances. * * * You yourself would delight me greatly with news at any time. No doubt you will already have found true friends in Emilie Ritter and her mother?

May I ask you to keep my letters to the dear departed strictly to yourself—unless you prefer to destroy them? They are not suitable for anyone to see, as they are mostly of a very intimate [1] nature and there is much in them which could only be understood aright by Theodore. If you insist upon parting with the small sum of money belonging to me which came into your hands through your husband's death (and there is certainly too little of it for me to be able to ask you to use it to any wished-for purpose of your own!), will you convey it to my wife's poor parents (to Frau Planer * *). * * *

But if you are ever in a situation to make use of my friendly assistance, do indeed give me the pleasure of calling upon me without reserve. * * *

240. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, 30*th March*, 1853.

* * * * How nonsensical it really is that you torment yourself in order to—help me?? No, indeed! *I* am not to be helped so—at most perhaps my "renown"—and that is something very different from *me*! Nothing on paper is of use to me any longer; and yet all my intercourse with the world now is only on paper.— * * *

Things cannot go on like this!! I will not endure this life any longer!—

And now I beg you, most urgently and positively—get the Court at Weimar to take some definite step to see, once for all, whether I have a real prospect of seeing the way opened for my return to Germany speedily and soon. * * * Be open with me, quite regardless! Tell me whether the Court of Weimar [2] will take

[1] The edition issued by the Villa Wahnfried (1888) of Wagner's letters to Uhlig is a Bowdlerised one. The full text of a number of these letters is to be found in a newspaper, *Das Orchester*, 1885.

[2] On 8 April Liszt answered hopefully, emphasising the fact that the heir apparent, Karl Alexander, was greatly interested in Wagner. Consequently the latter sent congratulations when Karl came to the throne in a letter of 14 July, 1853, published in *Deutsche Rundschau*, Jan. 1925, p. 4.

the step, and if it is taken and taken soon—what the answer is. I am not minded to yield in the smallest degree for the sake of attaining my wish. *You* will accept my assurance that I shall remain a non-participant in politics and anyone who is not a fool must see for himself that *I* am no "demagogue" in need of police supervision. * * * If a definite refusal is the answer, only tell me quickly and without ceremony; I shall know where I stand then—and I shall begin a quite different life. I shall set out to make *money*, however and wherever I can. I shall borrow—steal if it comes to the point—so that I can *travel*. The beautiful parts of Italy, of course, will be closed to me if I am *not* amnestied, so I shall go to Spain, Andalusia, find travelling companions—and try to live once more as best I can. I should like to go round the world! If I can't raise *any* money—or if even travel does not breathe the breath of life into me afresh—well—that's the end—and I would rather seek death by my own hand than live on like this!

The truth is that I have come to my thirty-fifth year before realising that *up to now I have not lived at all*. It was my art that first disclosed to me what a wretched life, barren of love and joy, I have lived hitherto. What will you say when you learn I have never yet enjoyed the true happiness of love? Now I pass my life between privation and a resigned submission to the pettiness of an environment which misunderstands me, and is less and less able to understand me every day! * * * I must at least acquire the means to get away from this desert from time to time, that I may give free and untrammelled scope to the life-force within me. * * * *

241. TO ROBERT FRANZ, HALLE-AN-DER-SAALE [1]

ZURICH, *24th April*, 1853.

* * A point in your letter obliges me to write to you sooner than I would have done had I been writing to you at length as was originally my intention. And yet it is all the better that I should be brief. I might write as fully as I liked and yet not be able to tell you what I most wish to say, namely, to convey the impression your songs have made on me. They place the prospect of your visit before me anew. I cling to that! Do contrive to come soon. I want really to get to know you; your songs have awakened in me the longing to do so. They have made very clear to me, too, that which is the main thing in all art—the artistic individuality, or, better still, the Man! All other impressions are derived solely from form, and the ordinary kinds of pleasure, or lack of pleasure, in works of

[1] *Zeitschrift für Musik*, 1924, p. 243.

art—particularly in contemporary intercourse between artists themselves—are almost wholly a matter of technique. If I set out to write to you I too should almost involuntarily dwell solely on technique, enter into questions of the relationship of verse to melody, of the poem to the tone-poem, of the poetry to the music. * * *

I have been in consuming, burning need of some impression to banish my loneliness and fill me with new fresh matter of interest. As I could not hope for this from the people about me I sought it despairingly in literature without discovering a trace of it.—Now you have given it to me and most heartily I thank you!—Instead of criticising I am always asking simply, "What can he look like? How does he speak? I wonder whether he sings his songs well?"—I count tremendously on that! I'll tell you what, best of friends! Show me the dear man who has made these songs! Come very soon to see me! Then, if you like, we can criticise each other; you have nothing to fear!— * * * *

242. TO LOUIS SCHINDELMEISSER, WIESBADEN

ZURICH, *29th May*, 1853.

* * * * A scenario of *Lohengrin* is being published this summer by Breitkopf and Härtel—too late for you. You must get on as best you can—I am *forced* to leave you in the lurch this time—I am too tired. But neither you nor the stage-manager can go wrong if you both follow my preface to a hairsbreadth. If only no remark of mine goes unnoticed, everything necessary will have been done. Of first importance is the Lohengrin himself. * * * By his appearance and the tone of his voice, Lohengrin must seem a saviour and a miracle and stir all hearts to blessed emotions! Take care! In Weimar Lohengrin was abominable!!—

Speaking of Weimar, I may tell you that on the purely musical side everything was arranged there magnificently from the first by Liszt, whereas the staging and presentation, on the contrary, under the direction of a dull stage-manager [Genast], were totally neglected. They came to me about cuts that were thought necessary. I had discovered where the trouble was and wrote and told them they might cut what they liked; the very fact that they thought it necessary to cut was evidence enough for me that the performance would be altogether unsatisfactory. The stage-manager then proposed certain cuts to me, whereupon I had to show him that he had simply failed to understand the passages he wanted to omit, and how he could best use these very passages which were necessary

to make the whole intelligible. After that they tried omitting this or that for a time (for the sake of saving five or ten minutes). Then Liszt saw the position and since then *Lohengrin* has always been given in Weimar complete and without cuts. There is no denying that in this way the thing makes a very affecting impression. Well, that is in the essence of the subject. I do not proffer easy entertainment, I deal in terror and pity; it is my only means of touching the folk of to-day. If this essence of the subject is to be changed, it will of course be emasculated; nothing remains but dissatisfaction and the true impression will never appear. Therefore test your company's powers of giving, of absorbing and of assimilating; if my work does not accord with these, leave it alone. * * *

And now for something else! Yesterday my little kapellmeister Schöneck of Posen wrote telling me that he had recently had an offer of your post [1] from Wiesbaden, "on my recommendation," too—(indirect it is to be presumed!). He was intensely delighted at the prospect of getting away from that filthy Posen, when at last they wrote again from Wiesbaden that Herr Lux [2] of Mainz was to get the post, which again depressed him very much. Listen, my dear friend! If there is still anything to be done in the matter, by all means work for Schöneck! I can truly congratulate any theatre that gets so immensely active and able a young man as director. As a musician he is commonplace and insignificant! as a man, without much culture; but his specific talent as a conductor is quite extraordinary. As such he is nervous and exquisitely sensitive; and incredibly diligent and resourceful in finding unlooked-for ways and means. Honestly I wish the poor devil a good post. If you can still get Wiesbaden for him I should be very glad!!—

The matter is of some importance to me too. If you are to leave Wiesbaden so soon, it is far from indifferent to me into whose hands my *Lohengrin* (a new-born nursling) is to come. Lux is said to think my *Tannhäuser* a piece of musical nonsense. I cannot prevent him thinking so but, true to my convictions, I would gladly prevent him from producing my works, for I know that he cannot produce them properly while remaining unsympathetic. Unfortunately you have gone so far with *Lohengrin* now that it would be difficult for me to withdraw it from Wiesbaden, a thing I should be strongly inclined to do if the appointment of Lux as your successor is confirmed. See that this reaches the proper quarter!— * * * *

[1] Schindelmeisser had accepted the call to Darmstadt. Schöneck had produced *The Flying Dutchman* in Zurich, 25 April, 1852, to Wagner's satisfaction. See also No. 246.

[2] The first edition (*An Freunde*, p. 125) has here and subsequently "Fux"—a mistake.

243. TO AUGUST RÖCKEL, WALDHEIM IN SAXONY

ZURICH, *8th June*, 1853.

* * * * My fame is constantly growing; I am regarded as an unheard-of and quite unclassifiable phenomenon; pamphlets and newspaper articles are being written about me wholesale; ignorance and admiration grow heated about me—and the whole thing leaves me indescribably indifferent! It would be impossible for me to write a word for the papers, so disgusted am I by the hopeless misunderstanding of my writings, while the very essence of my being and my views of life are still almost totally uncomprehended. I may take comfort from one thing, however. I am not only admired, but *loved* as well. Where criticism ends, love begins and has brought many a heart near to me. Yet *this* love must always be a far-away thing; it only touches my life very indirectly, and in the circumstances of that life as it is at present I can only gaze upon this kingdom of love from a vast distance. If I could only become a regular egotist I should do better, but things must be as they may and—like you —it is through resignation alone that I can at least maintain the integrity of my nature.— * * * *

244. TO MESSRS. BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

ZURICH, *20th June*, 1853.

* * I learn that you are publishing the pianoforte arrangement of Kittl's opera *The French at Nice*,[1] and I beg you at any rate to omit my name (as author of the libretto) from the title. I particularly pledged Kittl for his part not to announce my name publicly as author and I am sorry that this has been done already elsewhere. At present the most confused opinions are held about this authorship and I want to encourage them as little as possible.—* * * *

245. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

ZURICH, *20th June*, 1853.

* * * * I am paying an old debt to-day in order to enter upon my new indebtedness to you worthily and in a way to inspire confidence. Please give your wife the accompanying *Sonata*, my first composition[2] since the completion of *Lohengrin* (six years ago!). * * * *

[1] *Die Franzosen vor Nizza*. See above, No. 135. Wagner's wish was fulfilled; but in a libretto printed at Frankfort-on-Main, 1853, Wagner is named as the author of the words.

[2] In A flat major.

246. TO LOUIS SCHINDELMEISSER, WIESBADEN

ZURICH, *5th July*, 1853.

* * My reason for entering into certain explanations—before expressing to you my joy at the success of your undertaking [*Lohengrin*]—is that, now of all times, I cannot make too much haste to dispel the ill-humour which I know you to be harbouring.

I will begin with the Schöneck incident. A letter has come to your eyes written with an ostensible purpose. I recollect especially that I had two situations to guard against. The manager of the Leipzig theatre [Wirsing] wanted (quite without consulting me) to give *Tannhäuser* with his company in Berlin, and though I might be quite satisfied as regards his company, his conductor [Rietz] was far from satisfied. He is openly opposed to the matter in question and, as I have recently discovered, treats certain directions of mine (one, among others, concerning a perfectly idiotic cut by his manager) with derisive disregard. The "etc." was quite understandable by the initiated; it stood for "Herr Director Engel" (of the Kroll establishment) who, when Schöneck would not consent to certain dispositions, said, very well, *he* would conduct!—

I hope * * this will satisfy you and that you will not be looking for any further meanings in the "etc."—When I speak of him (Schöneck) as an excellent conductor and yet describe him to *you* as, for the rest, a commonplace musician, I ought to put it more clearly, that he is not a *creative* musician, not a shining light. (Was Guhr one, for instance, famous as he was as a conductor?) As regards my judgment on Schöneck as a *man*, I see that I have lost with you as a matter of course, since you have accepted the report of Schöneck's reputation from the mouth of Director Löwe.[1] As to the latter—I have nothing *against* him even if I have no desire to enter the lists *for* him. I am simply content to take great pains never to have anything to do with him.—

Well, I must just put up with the fact that, taking your stand on what I have touched on, you reject my recommendation of Schöneck with a scorn that is unmistakable—for I see that you understand me in this.—

Let there be an end of the matter!

When recently I spoke to you of my anxiety as to the success of *Lohengrin* in Wiesbaden, the reasons for it were, God knows! quite different from those you appear to suppose. Dearest friend, surely the fact that *now* at *this* particular moment in time I entrust *Lohengrin* to you unreservedly might well convince you of the

[1] There is a pun here on "Leumund" = reputation, and "Löwes Mund" = Löwe's (Lion's) mouth.

opinion I hold of you, since—as you very rightly mention—I know quite well that the success of this opera in Wiesbaden would not benefit you especially, whereas failure might do you a great deal of harm. It cannot be, therefore, that I feel any anxiety about matters under your control but simply about a matter which lies outside your sphere of action, and that is the *staging*. * * * Do remember that I have not yet produced *Lohengrin* myself; but when I recollect the multitude of discoveries I had still to make when I * * came to the actual staging of *Tannhäuser*, I know that in a certain sense *Lohengrin* has never been completely finished even by *me*. I know that there are still a number of important relevant matters lying hidden which I myself shall never be clear about till *I* can some day produce it with all the necessary media. Instead of this, however, I have only the Weimar experiences to go upon, and Liszt now assures me that nothing short of the most unheard-of personal exertions on his part succeeded in rendering the opera intelligible by indirect means, so inadequate was the actual presentation; all this in spite of the fact that I accord Liszt the highest praise as *musical* manager. Now—after three years—they have come to see in Weimar that almost the entire setting must be done afresh, because the old one was devised without sufficient understanding of my intentions. * * * But I am aware now that it is not only understanding that is lacking, but material, and very rich material at that, for it is just these refinements of production that require the most detailed and costly contrivances. So when I spoke to you of "materials," I was not referring at all to your musical capacities. * * * Nevertheless, in this respect there is a certain need for quantitative resources, by no means regulated simply by the space to be filled, but also purely in regard to the matter of the drama presented. * * * I * * assert * * that I should never wish to hear the orchestral prelude with less than twenty violins, nor the male chorus (particularly in Act II.) with less than about forty men. * * *

Recently I had occasion to look into *Lohengrin* a little. At the bare idea of producing the opera myself I felt the terrible challenge of the task in every nerve and muscle and was utterly horrified to know that I had burdened another with it. * * * *

247. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING AT EMS

ZURICH, 13*th July*, 1853.

* * * I have just lived through a wildly exciting yet magnificent week; Liszt left me only a few days ago. There was a regular storm

of talk between us. My delight in this indescribably lovable fellow was all the greater that I found him very robust and hardy, and altogether much better in health than I should have anticipated from earlier days. We had an incredible amount to tell each other, for it was really here we first made each other's nearer personal acquaintance, as before I had only spent an occasional short day with him. The eight days, which were all he could give me this time, were packed so full that I am still almost mazed! In the first few days I lost my voice, so then Liszt had to supply all the music alone; he played inconceivably!— * * *

Now I cannot put up with Zurich any longer. * * *—To-morrow morning, however, I am going away to St. Moritz. If I get through the cure successfully it will be Italy next. I have laid in a stock of well-ruled paper for studies and before the year is over I think the composition of *The Rhinegold* should be fully drafted. To my very agreeable surprise, Liszt concurred with me in my plan for the future production of my Dramatic Festival. We have settled that it is to take place from spring to autumn one year in Zurich.[1] A provisional theatre is to be built for the purpose and the singers, etc., that I need are to be expressly engaged. Liszt will go to all the four quarters of heaven and get contributions for the enterprise; and he is confident he can raise the necessary money.

You will admit we have settled no little between us! * * * *

248. TO LOUIS KÖHLER, KÖNIGSBERG [2]

St. Moritz, in the Canton of Graubünden,
24th July, 1853.

Do not be angry with me * * for answering your letter so late. Shortly after its receipt came Liszt's visit and directly after that I journeyed here into the high parts of Graubünden to take the cure. Besides, having little time to spare I had no great inclination to fall into the æsthetic theorising which I feared I should certainly be tempted into if I wrote a letter to you. I hope now I may get through without it, if I send you only just a short answer to tell you how very much pleasure your sympathy gives me and how I wish that your recent self-sacrificing excursion from Königsberg had met with a better reward than the * * rather distorted and spiritless performance of my *Tannhäuser* at Leipzig.

Your book [*The Melody of Speech*] surprised me indeed. Much of it concerns me so very closely that I was bound to get to know it; I had read it even before you sent it me. Your idea of looking for the melody in the words testifies to the earnestness with which

[1] Nothing came of this.

[2] *An Freunde*, p. 133.

you are grappling with the matter; and you have been most happy in detecting the true melodic and harmonious accents. In the main, indeed, I become more and more conscious that the matters in question are things every man settles most satisfactorily for himself, but since there is such a disastrous amount of learning going on it is natural enough to wish to conduce to a sensible method of teaching. Speaking of which, I have repeatedly pointed out to Brendel that in his [*New Musical*] *Journal* he ought to confine himself much more to what *is* learnable—that is, technique. The content of a work of art is an individual matter and does not concern the critic. He discusses feelings of like or dislike, and these again are matters for the individual. Technique, however, is the common property of artists of all ages; one inherits it from others, each adds to it and shapes it according to his ability and his necessity. This can be discussed, but naturally only between artists; the laity should know nothing about it. I really think my writings have afforded openings for much debate on the principal questions of technique; with little or no result so far, I observe.

If I have raised any important issue in this respect, it is surely that of the relationship between poetry and music in general—or between spoken verse and melody in particular. I think it would be a very good thing to try to make an exact and intelligible examination of modern spoken verse as it has been evolved by our literary poets, as a thing distinct in itself quite without regard to musical melody, and thereby to prove—with numerous examples —that this verse *cannot* be set to music, because our modern melody has developed from quite different and purely musical impulses, which have nothing at all in common with those which have produced the verse of literature. From this one false relation of æsthetic technique, the whole false relationship between our literary poetry and our music might be convincingly demonstrated; but this can only be done successfully by the method of a thoroughly detailed exposition of purely technical relevancies. Any kind of declamation upon the subject, in its general aspect, is absolutely useless and Brendel will certainly find himself perpetually besieged with questions—"What are we to do, then? Are we to go on composing at all? Are we to compose operas—or what else?" I have advised him to discourse himself on the subject of these questions, and on the fact that he receives them. Closer investigation is bound to bring out that we are dealing with an outworn old-fashioned technique, to which no artistic content whatever can possibly be imparted, so that we need not be surprised that our most adroitly constructed music—has nothing to say to us.

I am glad now that you have felt this for yourself—your writings are proof of it. Only I would rather you did not confine yourself for the most part only to the moods aroused in you by word-phrases pure and simple, but would pay more definite attention to the real melodious word-phrase—the verse. If, for instance, you let the literary verse stand, only singing it in accordance with its musical melodic content, you will still at best only get what I have elsewhere previously called "prosaic melody," "musical prose"; but it is just this prose which will have to be abolished if our (relatively) best music is to emerge from its unmelodious vagueness. In the first quarter of the third volume of *Opera and Drama* I have, I believe, expressed myself particularly and sufficiently on this point; I cannot but observe day by day how little notice has been given to it yet. You would be doing a good work if you were to make it, axiom by axiom, the subject of your inquiry in closest detail. This alone and nothing else is any use, the rest is nothing but idle blather!

Well, I have plunged quite deeply enough into theory—it's not good for me! My ailments have been brought on by theorising and I can only hope to regain my health through actual artistic production. I cannot "write" about art any more. Perhaps some day you will get something better than that from me—something to hear and to see! * * *

249. TO LOUIS SCHINDELMEISSER, WIESBADEN

ZURICH, *13th August*, 1853.

* * * * [Alexander] Müller has told me * * marvels about your performances of *Lohengrin*. Be ever assured of my warmest thanks! * * *

As to my new poem, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, I am now regretting terribly that—for hard cash too—I had fifty copies of it printed. It is not only that I cannot prevent the book getting into the hands of totally unauthorised persons, but I now feel that even my friends ought not really to have this poem before it is set to music and—I would almost add—*produced* as well. I see more and more clearly that the work I have on hand is something which I ought to get *done*, and ought not to permit to be endlessly discussed. Instead of concentrating on the poem before them and on its purely poetic aspect, people are always seizing upon the purely technical aspect of a conjectured musical setting, as if such a poem only came into being to give the usual operatic composer occasion for a discharge of music instead of being, as it is, rooted and grounded in itself, in the life and the view of life of the poet, bringing to the

musician a new subject to which, and in which, he must discover new music—that is music suited to this subject and to this subject alone. Since, accordingly, the musical (and also the scenic) setting is necessarily my secret, only discoverable by myself when all is complete, nothing could be more distressing to me now than to have to hear this intimate artistic secret of mine discussed by others —publicly, perhaps, at last. In short, I wish I could recall all the copies I have given away. Only come and see me soon, and I will *read* it to you, *sing* what is already done and *talk* to you about it;—after *that* you can take a copy away with you if you would like to have one! But I would rather do nothing to increase the misunderstandings which distress me. Please don't take this the wrong way!—

* * * You will be getting an alteration in the close of *Tannhäuser* from Dresden, according to which the corpse of Elizabeth does *not* appear, nor do the Landgrave and singers come on, but instead of them the younger pilgrims singing, as in the first version. All the rest remains, necessarily—the whole Venus incident, etc., up to "*Holy Elizabeth, pray for me,*"—after which comes the earlier close. The young pilgrims carry the budding staff in their midst. —Previously the death of Elizabeth has been merely indicated by the light of torches on the Wartburg, tolling of bells and men's voices chanting *from there* (that is from above).—

All the talk about the appearance of a corpse and prosaic calculations about the physical, anatomical and social possibilities of this burial of Elizabeth "in so short a time" (how fortunate that on such occasions people have time to think about time!) have so disgusted me at last that I decided on *this* alteration—or reversion, rather.— * * * *

250. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *25th November*, 1853.

* * * * What is Joachim [1] doing, the "Chosen One" of Schumann? You ought to have come to Paris [2] too. The experiences of that time have exalted me very much, and the child [Princess Marie von Wittgenstein] has become something high and holy to me. I and my composition live under her blessing now; I have never yet felt so well in music-making and this month I almost finished the first half of *The Rhinegold*, though unfortunately I was hindered by an illness, a violent cold and fever with its consequences. * * *

[1] In July Joachim accompanied Liszt on a visit to Wagner. See No. 247.

[2] On Wagner's short stay in Paris and the friendship of "the child," see *My Life*, pp. 605–7.

I am completely at sea about Karl [Ritter]. Each time I give him a rough or vigorous answer, I soon regret it heartily; but when I have almost come to the point of asking pardon, I always get something from him that turns me right round and makes me answer in the very tone I have just been sorry for, feeling that I had not handled him aright that way. The silly fellow never sees that if one of us is to be intensely irritable, it should certainly be *I* rather than he, by virtue of a thousand experiences and impressions. He pays me back for the expression of such wounded and tender susceptibilities by much greater irritability, and in this he is encouraged by his view of our relationship, for he regards himself as entirely on an equality with me. As regards this open claim to equality on his part, I fully assent to it as regards capacity and the like,—indeed I would gladly put him high above me in these matters—but when he overlooks the vast and painfully acquired wealth of actual experience that necessarily gives infinitely greater weight to me than to him, it is bound in time to lead to ever-increasing error in all his dealings with me, even to the point of total misunderstanding of everything I say. * * * *

251. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH], *17th December*, 1853.

* * * I am really angry with myself for having burdened you—over-indulgent friend that you are—with the Härtel [1] affair as well. Forgive me! It's over now and—God willing—you shall never be involved in such Jew-business again. It is true that for the moment I am in a desperate situation—but that must not trouble you!

As to Härtel's, I await the occasion of being able to applaud their nobility. Besides, they do not understand the matter, they have no power of discrimination * *. There is nothing to be done with them and indeed I would rather not have anything to do with such people. * * * *

I am spinning myself round like a silkworm, but I am also spinning something *out* of myself. I have written no music for five years. I am in Nibelheim [2] now; Mime made his plaint to-day. Unfortunately I was seized with another violent feverish cold last month, which kept me from work ten days, otherwise I should have finished my first draft this year. * * * *

[1] Proffer of the theatrical profits on *Lohengrin* to Breitkopf and Härtel, who, however, refused.

[2] i.e. in Scene ii. of *The Rhinegold*.

252. TO THE SAME

[ZURICH], *15th January*, 1854.

* * *The Rhinegold* is finished—but I am finished too!!!—

Just lately I have had, necessarily and purposely, to dull my feelings to all but my work and I have repressed every impulse to write to you before its completion. To-day is the first morning when no pretext restrains me any longer from letting my long-nourished, long-imprisoned wretchedness break forth! * * * *

* * * Not a year of my life has passed recently without bringing me *once* to the very verge of a decision to make an end of my life. Everything in it seems so lost and astray! A too hasty marriage with a woman, estimable but totally unsuited to me, has made me an outlaw for life. For a long time the ordinary pressure of circumstances and ambitious plans and wishes to relieve that pressure by winning renown, were able to disguise from myself my real emptiness of heart. The truth is that I reached my thirty-sixth year before I completely realised that terrible emptiness. * * *

God! How gladly would I flee naked into the world, be nothing, nothing more than a happily loving and beloved man! Well, the latter I can never more be; never more can I love happily but only *unhappily*[1]—"an outlaw—an impossible person"!!—

Dearest friend,—ever since, art has been really no more than a matter of secondary importance to me, a mere makeshift, nothing else! * * I am *forced* to make shift with it to be able to live *at all*. Yet actually it is with real despair that again and again I turn to art. * * * For I cannot live like a dog, I cannot bed in straw or satisfy my soul with gin. Mine is a highly susceptible, intense, voracious yet uncommonly sensitive and fastidious sensuality, which must somehow or other be flattered if my mind is to accomplish the agonising labour of calling a non-existent world into being.

Well, when I once more took up the plan of the *Nibelungs* and its actual execution, many things were needed to stimulate me to the requisite mood of artistic ardour; I had to be able to live in better style than recently! * * * In the end I ceased to ask if a thing cost money but just appropriated everything I could think of that could give me a pleasing sensation and bring me into a happy mood. * * *

* * * As the year drew to an end it became clear to me that I should want much, very much money to be able to continue in my nest of Philistines much longer. * * * *

And all this torment, want and trouble about a life that I hate, that I curse!— * * * *

[1] Allusion to his love for Mathilde Wesendonck.

* * * You must help me now! Things are bad—very bad with me. * * * *

First of all, however, I must have money. Härtel's [1] have been very open-handed, but what's the use of hundreds to me when I need thousands? * * * To relieve my anxieties and enable me to strike a balance I need three to four thousand thalers. My operas may easily bring in as much in three years. * * * I would lease my copyright to a lender. * * * *

Well, *The Rhinegold* is complete—more complete than I thought. With what faith, with what joy I set to work upon the music! I have carried it through and ended it at last in a real rage of despair! Was not I too the slave of the need for gold? Believe me, no composition was ever done like that before; I think my music must be terrible—a maelstrom of horrors and sublimities!—

Soon—(??) I shall make the fair copy—black on white—and that's probably as far as it will go. Or shall I perhaps let them produce it in Leipzig for twenty louis d'or!?

I cannot write any more to you to-day. You are the only one to hear this from me; no one else guesses it even, least of all my nearest acquaintances!— * * * *

Something must come of London; I would even go to America to satisfy my future creditor [2]; I would make that sacrifice for the sake of finishing my *Nibelungs*.

253. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, WEIMAR

ZURICH, 16*th January*, 1854.

* * Many thanks for your letter! Your last one from Hanover, with its gift of good news from Hamburg and of rubbish from the Leipziger *Lohengrin* affair, came the day before Liszt's letter telling me (most kindly and gently) of the disappointment at Leipzig.—

It is a real joy to see one's noblest and best maltreated and derided, but unfortunately this time a great deal depended on my being spared this pleasure. Liszt has been rather incomprehensible in this affair. He seems to have misunderstood the conditions under which I allowed Leipzig to have *Lohengrin*, namely that he was to appear as my *alter ego* and even exercise the right of veto. But that is just the unfortunate thing about him, that he will only very occasionally let it come to an out-and-out quarrel with anyone, even when a fight is inevitable. In any case he interpreted the conditions very amply on his part—perhaps because he saw that the Leipzig

[1] Breitkopf and Härtel had of their own accord sent him a fee of 300 thalers in advance for *Lohengrin*.

[2] Liszt could not find the financier Wagner wished for.

people did not at all want to take the matter up. Why did he not drop the whole thing at once, then? Did he think the Leipzig performance absolutely necessary, even if it were a foredoomed failure? A funny sort of policy! But I have it! I am obliged to see that he made no use at all of my conditions, for he advised Rietz (?!) to write (?!) about the adjustment of certain tempi which the latter had pulled so badly that it usually led to complete breakdown. Accordingly, either Liszt was never at a rehearsal, or he was too weak to raise a *single* protest. What a pity it is! Oh! if I had only kept to the determination I formed two years ago, not to let my operas be performed anywhere yet! Accursed inconstancy!— * * * *

The Rhinegold is finished (written especially for Leipzig). * * * *

254. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

[ZURICH, *20th January*, 1854.]

* * It is really time I told you again how much I love you! I am taking my best writing-paper so as to make this declaration of love as impressive to you as possible. * * * *

I have let myself in for severe chastisement through these present productions of my operas. I am indeed doing penance for having been untrue to myself and having agreed to allow them. An additional torment is that from time to time the hope of big profits is aroused in me, and this—for I am like that—leads me on to extravagance; then all of a sudden the whole thing shrinks to a matter of a few miserable pence and ha'pence! * * *

Well, these are vain plaints which a respectable man ought not to make.—But I must just tell you how I live here now. Like a regular oddity. For some time I have had a mania for luxury. (Anyone who is capable of realising for *what* it has to make up to me, will hardly be displeased with me!) In the mornings I sit down in the midst of this luxury and *work*. That is what I need most of all and a morning without work is a day in hell to me. By work, however, I do not mean "reading," a thing I can hardly do at all now, it is so repellent to me, but—composition. I usually sit too long over this and rouse the just ire of my wife by getting ready for dinner too late, so it is in the most amiable mood in the world that I enter upon the second half of my day, with not the least idea what to do with it. Lonely walks in the fog; many evenings to the Wesendoncks'. Tell Emilie that it is there I still get my only inspiration; that charming lady remains faithful and devoted to me, though there is much that is necessarily painful to me in this acquaintance.—The most interesting

hour of the day is still that which brings the postman, so I am still almost wholly dependent on what comes from without.— * * * *

The day before yesterday I nearly wrote to the King of Saxony to grant me an amnesty. Naturally the mood didn't last long and then I wanted to go straight to Germany and let myself be imprisoned if necessary. Now I let the fate of God's sending have its way with me again—and shall soon return to music-making. * * * *

255. TO AUGUST RÖCKEL, WALDHEIM IN SAXONY

ZURICH, *25th January*, 1854.

* * * * I come back to it that you seem to me to be happier in your lot than I am in mine. Every line of your letter shows me that you are in health. I assure you of my joyful amazement at it! That you can write me a five-page letter assures me, too, of an improvement in your personal conditions for which I am heartily glad, even though I must assert that I can imagine circumstances in which I could refuse any and every amelioration of existence without grieving very much for what I was renouncing. One thing excels all others—Freedom! But what is freedom? Is it—as our politicians believe—licence? No, indeed! Freedom is *integrity*. Whosoever is true, that is, completely at one with his nature in accordance with the law of his being, he is *free*. Outward compulsion only really attains its end when it destroys the integrity of its victim, when the latter becomes a hypocrite and tries to make himself and others believe him other than he really is. That is true slavery. But the victim of constraint need never let it come to this and the man who preserves his integrity—even under compulsion—preserves his essential freedom also; at least he is certainly more free than one who no longer notices the constraint of which our world is full, because his soul is wholly submissive, and who has defaced himself by submission.

I believe that this integrity is in essence the whole of that truth spoken of in our philosophies and theologies. * * * Therefore to be consumed with love of absolute truth is to surrender oneself to absolute reality upon the emotional side—to experience the joys and sorrows of the begetting, growth and the blossom time of life, its withering and dissolution, refusing nothing—to desire life only that we may live in delight and in anguish—and so die. This alone is to "be consumed with love of truth." But to make this self-immolation possible we must utterly abandon the search for the whole. The whole only reveals itself to us through separate phenomena, for it is these alone that we are able to perceive in the full

sense of the word. We can only really understand a phenomenon when we can let ourselves be wholly absorbed in it, as we must also be able to absorb it wholly into us. "How is this marvellous process most fully achieved?" asks Nature! Only through *Love*!—everything which I am unable to love remains outside myself and I outside it; the philosopher may flatter himself that he understands this, but not the real man. Now the full reality of love is only possible between the sexes. It is only as Man and Woman that we mortals can love most really, whilst all other loves are mere derivatives, originating in it, connected with it, or æsthetic counterfeits of it. * * *

Enough! I dare send you this confession in your loneliness without fear of awakening distress in you by thus imparting my views. Not you alone, but I too—and all of us—are living at present under circumstances and in conditions which only permit of substitutes and makeshifts. For you no less than for me, the truest, most real love can only be a concept, an aspiration. I have come to my thirty-sixth year before divining the true meaning of the æsthetic impulse in myself. Till then, I took art to be the end and life the means. * * * *

* * * It only remains to describe what, from my point of view, I cannot but feel bound to do in order to draw mankind * * —myself and mankind together—nearer to the goal which I have descried, without the use of those means which I have once and for all forsworn. My art is to help me to do it, and the particular work of art which I have to frame to this end is my *Nibelung* poem. I am inclined to think that the reason much of it remained unintelligible to you is to be sought less in any obscurity in the present form of the poem than in your own point of view, sincerely held yet very divergent from mine. * * * For me my poem has the following meaning:—the representation of Reality as defined by me above.—Instead of the words "a dark day dawns for the Gods. Thy glorious race shall yet end in shame, unless thou surrender the Ring!", I shall now let Erda say only, "All that is—has an end. A dark day dawns for the Gods. I counsel thee, shun the Ring!"—We must learn to die, and to die in the fullest sense of the word; dread of the end is the source of all lovelessness and it is engendered only where love is already fading. How came it that this highest blessing of all things living so vanished from the race of men that at last all the acts of humanity came to be rooted and grounded solely in fear of the end? My poem supplies the answer. It shows Nature as she really is, undistorted, all her actual various antitheses comprising things mutually repellent. But the ultimate source of disaster is not in Alberich's repulse by the Rhine Maidens * *. Alberich and his ring could not harm the Gods were these not already ripe for

evil. Where, then, is the root of this evil? Look at the first scene between Wotan and Fricka which leads finally to Act II. of *The Valkyrie*. The strong chain which binds those two, forged from love's instinctive error in desiring to prolong itself through inevitable change, in asking mutual guarantees in opposition to the law of eternal transmutation and renewal in the world of phenomena, constrains them both to the mutual torment of lovelessness. Accordingly the whole course of the drama demonstrates the necessity of recognising and submitting to the multiplicity, the ever-changing aspects, the eternal renewals of Reality and of Life. Wotan rises to the tragic dignity of *willing* his own destruction. This is the whole lesson we have to learn from human history—to will the thing that must be and ourselves to fulfil it. The creative power of this highest, self-annihilating Will finds ultimate issue in Siegfried, the man fearless and steadfast in love.—That is all.—In detail the poem tells of the power of evil, the true poison of Love, under the similitude of the Gold, stolen from Nature and misused, the Nibelungen Ring. The curse resting upon the Ring can never be lifted till it is restored to Nature, till the Gold is once again sunk in the waters of the Rhine. This, too, Wotan learns to recognise only at the very end, at the term of his tragic story. It was he who, in his greed of power, utterly ignored what Loki had early told him so often and so movingly. He first learned to believe in the power of the curse through Fafner's death, but it was not till the Ring came to be the ruin of Siegfried that he understood that only through the restitution of the spoils could the evil be annulled, and accordingly made his own wished-for annihilation a condition of the wiping out of that most ancient wrong. Experience is everything. Siegfried alone (Man by himself) is not the perfect "Man." He is but the half and not till Brynhilde is with him does he become a Saviour. One solitary cannot do everything; numbers are needed, and suffering, self-immolating Woman is at length the true and conscious Saviour; for Love is indeed the "Eternal Feminine" itself.—So much for the universal and greatest aspects of the drama; they comprise many others more particular and more defined.

I cannot but think that you likewise have taken this to be my meaning, only it seems to me that you attribute more value to the middle and intermediary members of the great chain than really belongs to them as such, and, moreover, that you had been driven to do this in order to justify from my poem a preconceived philosophy peculiar to *you*. On the whole I do not accept certain objections made by you on the score of lack of clarity in specified instances. On the contrary, I believe it was a true instinct that

has led me to guard against an excessive zeal for making things clear, for I have felt unmistakably that to make my intention too obvious would be to hinder a proper understanding; in drama—as in art generally—the way to produce an effect is not by a statement of opinion but by a presentation of the instinctive. And this is just what distinguishes my poetic matter from the political matter which at present monopolises the field. * * * What most astonishes me, coming from you, is the question, "When the Rhinegold is given back to the Rhine, why do the gods perish nevertheless?"—I believe that a good production of the drama would completely satisfy the simplest mind on this point. The downfall of the gods does *not* proceed from counterpoints[1]—things that can generally be explained, twisted and turned (one need only set a political jurist on the job as advocate)—no, we feel in our inmost souls, as does Wotan, that their destruction is of Necessity. The object was, then, to justify this necessity *emotionally*, and this happens quite naturally if the whole action of the drama with all its simple and natural motives is followed sympathetically from beginning to end. When Wotan at last declares this necessity, he is only saying what we ourselves have already recognised. At the end of *The Rhinegold* when Loki cries after the gods as they enter Walhalla, "Swiftly ye speed to your End, ye who dream that your throne is established!",[2] he expresses in that moment no more than the feeling of anyone who follows this prelude with interest, not hypercritically or analytically, and duly allowing the incidents to work upon his emotions.— * * *

* * * The composition — now complete — of the difficult and momentous *Rhinegold* has brought me once again a great sense of certitude, but I perceive anew how much there is, by the very nature of my poetic intent, that can be revealed through the music alone. *I* can no longer look at the poem without music. In time I think I shall be able to tell you about the composition. For the present, only this much—that it has become a close-knit unity; there will be scarcely an orchestral note which does not proceed from a preconceived motive. * * *

* * * How I am ever to achieve production, is a tremendous problem, to be sure. Still, I shall make the attempt in due time, as I can see before me no other adequate object in life. I feel fairly certain that the purely mechanical side of the enterprise could be contrived. But—my performers?! There I heave a deep sigh! Of course I must insist upon young players not yet entirely spoiled by

[1] "is not a question of mechanical adjustments"?

[2] Ihrem Ende eilen sie zu, die so stark im Bestehen sich wähnen. (TRANS.)

our operatic stage. I would not even *consider* so-called "celebrities." I shall have to see first how I am to train my young people. I should prefer to have my company together for a year without letting them appear in public, work with them day by day, give them a humane and artistic training and let them ripen gradually for their task. Accordingly I could not look for a first performance before the summer of 1858 [1] even under the most favourable conditions. Let the time be as long as it will, however, I feel a constant urge to give myself a reason for living through intense concentration on a goal of my very own. * * *

I am not so out of touch with Nature as you think, even though I am no longer personally in a position for scientific intercourse with her. Herwegh has to do this on my behalf. He lives here too and has long pursued nature studies very thoroughly, and through him, my friend, I learn very beautiful and important things about Nature who governs me in the many and great things of life. It is only when she is supposed to take the place for me of Life itself—that is, Love—that I turn from her. * * * *

256. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *3rd February*, 1854.

* * * * If music-making had not still something to offer me, I assure you the time would soon come when you would seek me in vain, for my desire for death is growing and I am coming to know my own mind in the matter more and more clearly. I still hang on out of sheer ambition to show you such music as you have, perhaps, no conception of. And so the life instinct dwindles at last to a mere theoretical whim! * * * *

Härtel's are willing to accept the pianoforte pieces from *Lohengrin*. But they do not wish your name to appear "because our public of *amateurs*," they write, "imagine difficulties and do not buy when they see the name of a well-known virtuoso on the cover." They would prefer that there should be no name—the suggestion being that the work was mine.—I have discussed the matter with them already, but I see they will stick to their point. What am I to do?—I think you should do the things—soon too [2]—and I will see you get properly paid for them. Let me have an answer. * * *

[1] As is known, this did not occur till 1876.

[2] Bülow did not do this, but the "Lyrical Pieces from *Lohengrin* for voice and pianoforte adapted by the Composer," which appeared in nine separate parts in 1854, were arranged by Bülow, whose name appears on later editions. A two-handed and four-handed pianoforte arrangement of these "Lyrical Pieces" was published later by S. Jadassohn.

257. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *7th February*, 1854.

* * * * I am now scoring *The Rhinegold*, straight away, with the orchestration. I could find no way of writing the prelude (the Depths of the Rhine) clearly in outline, so I fell back on doing the full score forthwith. It only means that it will take so much the longer to finish—and my head is somewhat confused. * * * *

258. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *4th March*, 1854.

* * Many thanks for your *Artists*.[1] You had to overcome in me a lot of opposition to this composition—I was in no humour for it, I may tell you! * * * Just think what antagonism you were bound to arouse in me by your choice of a poem alone! This is a more or less didactic poem. We listen to the voice of the philosopher, betaking himself to art once more, and doing so with the most emphatic resolution—Schiller indeed, to the life.—And then a concert choir!—I have no longer any taste for that kind of thing and I could not compose it at any price—I should not know where to get the inspiration for it. And another thing! My attitude as a musician to the verse of speech is now vastly changed from what it used to be. For no consideration could I now find melodies for Schiller's verse, which was certainly made to be read. These lines could *only* be dealt with musically in a somewhat arbitrary manner and this arbitrary manner drives us—seeing that the melody can never attain fluency—to aberrations in harmony, violent efforts to force the unmelodious fount to assume artistic undulations.—I have been through it all myself and have arrived at a stage of evolution where I turn to an entirely different formation. Thus—consider it—the *entire* instrumental prelude to *The Rhinegold* is executed solely on the common chord of E flat! Well, then, think how sensitive I am likely to be at the moment upon all these points and how staggered I must have been on first opening your *Artists* to run full tilt against a complete contradiction of my actual *present* system! I do not deny that I proceeded with much shaking of the head and stupidly almost always managed to light upon things that antagonised me, that is, I only looked at details here and details there. But then there were many of these details which tended to modify my ill-humour. Finally I pulled myself up and was struck by the sensible idea of running through and getting a general view of the *whole*—and then, happily, the thing began to grow upon me. Suddenly

[1] *An die Künstler* (To Artists) for male choir (soli and choruses) and orchestra, composed in 1853 but not published till 1858 after revision in 1857.

I seemed to see you at the rostrum—saw you, heard you and understood you. Here was a new instance in actual experience of the truth that it is *only our own* fault if we cannot accept what is offered us whole-heartedly. This call of yours to *Artists* is something great and noble and splendid, proceeding from your own life as an artist. I was deeply moved by the force of your intention. * * * *

I am working at high pressure. Could you not tell me of someone capable of copying out a proper score from my wild pencil notes? This time I am working very differently from formerly, but to make a fair copy would be the death of me! I should be wasting precious time over it which I could spend to far better purpose; and, besides, much writing makes me ill and takes away my inclination for my real work. Without an able copyist I am lost, but with him I should finish the *whole* in two years. I should need someone [1] for the whole of that period; any intervals in copying could be occupied in writing out parts. Have a look round! There is nobody here. Of course it sounds somewhat ridiculous for me to want to keep a secretary—when I can scarcely keep myself!—

You ask me, my dear fellow, what my *most pressing* debts amount to! * * * If you could supply me with five thousand francs as a loan (till the end of the year) you would indeed free me from the torments of hell! I have drained the last possible halfpenny from my only source of borrowing here—that is from poor Sulzer, whom I have got into serious embarrassment by my failures to repay him. That is another source of torment—I can scarcely look him in the face.— * * * *

259. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *9th April*, 1854.

* * * * Ah, dearest, dearest, one and only Franz! Give me but a heart, a mind, a woman's soul in which to lose myself utterly—which will wholly understand me—and how little I should need in this world—how indifferent I should feel to all the frippery that I have taken to lately as a mad kind of distraction—in very despair!!— * * * *

The instrumentation of *The Rhinegold* proceeds—I have now gone down to Nibelheim with the orchestra. The whole will be finished in May—but not the fair copy—everything on stray sheets in illegible pencil script. You will not be able to see it for some time. *The Valkyrie* must be tackled in June.— * * * *

[1] No one was found and Wagner changed his mind on the point. See end of No. 261 and beginning of No. 263.

260. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, STAYING AT DRESDEN

ZURICH [*April* 1854].

* * * * The instrumentation of *The Rhinegold* is now half finished, but only in pencil, and there is still the fair copy to be made. I shall then send it you—the fair copy—in numbers, so that you can quickly make me a pianoforte arrangement—in the first place simply so that I can conveniently play and sing the stuff to people.

—I have had no answer as yet from Sitten,[1] but I hear this much—that the Musical Festival will not take place before July. I tell you the news forthwith! Joachim thinks he may not be able to come—he too is a Philistine perhaps? Call him over the coals.—

* * * If only Zurich were not such a nest of scoundrels! I take refuge in my work now, of course, and when I look beyond my own door I ignore all but the lovely scenery—and *that dear lady*.[2] If you can survive for a spell in such an atmosphere, come when you feel inclined.— * * *

261. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *2nd May*, 1854.

* * * * Don't take it ill of me if now and then I fail to tell you of something that concerns me! The usual reason is that I think it of no importance. The affair of the Federal Musical Festival at Valais stands thus: The committee invited me some time ago to conduct this Musical Festival and I flatly refused, but said I was ready to undertake a Beethoven Symphony (the A major) if they would appoint for the Festival proper a special conductor who was satisfied with this arrangement. They accepted readily and engaged a musical-director of Berne (Methfessel, who happens to be very devoted to me) for the Festival. They then thought good to represent the affair in the bills they issued as though I *and* Methfessel had undertaken to conduct the "Festival of Music" jointly. Perhaps that struck you as strange?—For the rest, there is nothing "musical" to be expected of this gathering. I am uneasy about the orchestra they are getting together—but the chief doubt is whether a passable choir of singers will be assembled. Add to this that there is only to be *one* rehearsal and you will understand why I did not involve myself any deeper in the affair. * * * *

In the end I suppose I shall have personally to make a fair copy

[1] On the Music Festival at Sitten which Wagner was invited to conduct, see Nos. 261, 265, 266. Cf. also *My Life*, pp. 612, 613.

[2] See No. 252, note 1, p. 256.

of my score. It would be much too hard a task for anyone else to perform to *my* liking; besides, the fact is that the rough sketches are frequently so horribly confused that probably only I could make head or tail of them. It will take longer, that is all!— * * * *

262. TO PRINCESS CAROLINE SAYN-WITTGENSTEIN, WEIMAR [1]

ZURICH, *3rd June*, 1854.

DEAR *Kapellmeisterin*!

* * * * I find Liszt more admirable than ever. Taciturn fellow that he is, how loud speaks his every deed! His many-sided artistic activities astound me, well as I know that such is our only way of enduring suffering.—His "programmes" excite me so that I pine to get to know his *Symphonic Poems* as the most desirable experience I can possibly hope for in the field of art. Could he not at least send me the scores, as it will not be easy for me to hear him perform the works? How reserved he is with me!

His essays for Brendel's [*New Musical*] *Journal* [2] are amazingly fine; one seems all at once to see Poetry enter the dry-as-dust publication in person. And how shrewdly logical Liszt is, for all this play of imagination; it is the shrewdness of genius at its highest and most passionate. What a pity that it is really written only for us! Who else understands it?

I am touched to the heart that he wants to weave yet another garland for the grave of the *Dutchman*. This tender piety is Liszt's alone. He alone would feel there was life in the deceased; it would occur to no one else to trouble himself about this "outworn point of view." The child will have told you how my *Rhine Maidens* are progressing. I cannot rest until I begin *The Valkyrie*.— * * * *

263. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH, *14th June*, 1854.]

* * * * Do not look for a copyist for me. Madame Wesendonck has presented me with a golden pen, of indestructible writing power, which has made me again a pedant in calligraphy. These scores will be my most perfect masterpiece in exquisite handwriting! One cannot evade one's destiny. There was a time when Meyerbeer used to admire nothing in my scores so much as the neat script and this admiration has fastened upon me like a curse! I *must* write neat scores so long as I live on earth!—

[1] *An Freunde*, p. 150.

[2] In 1854 Liszt and others wrote on Gluck's *Orpheus*, Beethoven's *Fidelio* and *Egmont*, Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Cf. *Liszt: Collected Writings*, vol. iii. (Leipzig, 1881), where is also the essay on *The Flying Dutchman* which first appeared in vol. xli. of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.

You are to have *The Rhinegold*, but you shall not set eyes on it till it is in the worthy form I contemplate, and I shall make no progress with that till after many leisure hours in the long winter evenings, for I cannot delay over it now—I must set to upon the composition of *The Valkyrie* which I am gloriously full of.— * * * *

264. TO THE SAME

[ZURICH], *3rd July*, 1854.

* * * * To-day I am going to Valais but expect to return very soon. I haven't the money for roaming about nor the inclination, while nothing gives me pleasure but my work. *The Valkyrie* is begun —now *at last* things are moving, I can tell you!—

Odd, the contrast of this first love scene in *The Valkyrie* with that in *The Rhinegold*! * * *

265. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, STAYING AT SEELISBERG

SITTEN, *10th July*, 1854.

* * * * I very much regret having let myself be lured here.[1] What would I not give to have followed my instincts and stayed quietly at work in Zurich! In the first place they have got me here much too soon. Since the day before yesterday I have been in this mean hole to no purpose whatever, and the weather is for the most part bad into the bargain. The actual rehearsal is not till to-morrow as most of the musicians only arrive to-day. But it is not even a genuine Federal Musical Festival at all—only one for this neighbourhood. They will be happy if they get an audience of 500. A poor orchestra has been scraped together in a small church—the whole thing as wretched as can be. About 35 musicians are coming; the rest are a mere rabble whom it would be better not to let play at all. In short, in this pickle I feel as if I had to play kapellmeister at a country fair and I have a very good mind to abscond. I shall presently hear to-day how it sounds in the church. If the echo is too great and if the orchestra sounds as confused and indistinct as I fear it will, I shall hand over the whole kettle of fish to Herr Methfessel (who will lick his chops over it) and come away. It is pure impudence to expect me to handle such rubbish. * * * *

266. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, DRESDEN

[ZURICH, *August* 1854.]

* * I am in a very ill humour. A month ago I was burning to begin composing *The Valkyrie* and wanted to write forthwith to Sitten refusing, but kindly consideration prevented my doing so.

[1] See No. 260, note 1.

I set out, planted myself on Karl on Lake Geneva, spent two days of atrocious boredom at Sitten till I was surfeited with the whole pack and then, not wishing to make an exhibition of myself, departed all of a sudden without leave-taking. I looked up Karl and Hornstein. From Geneva at last I visited the former at his villa and there met Hornstein. I found the foolish * * * [1] a great joke. I took an interest in his sonatas and in his rendering of them. I advised him to make a fair copy of *six* for publication, to which I would lend my willing aid. It is very dull at Karl's for any length of time and, besides, I would rather that his wife did not remind me so much of "Dräsen."[2] Still, I don't altogether dislike her, but I wonder how long Karl will carry on with her. That between ourselves!—After spending a fortnight on the Seelisberg on the Lake of Lucerne, where my wife was taking a cure, back I come feeling very annoyed about three wretched weeks spent away from my work. It is all over for me—I have nothing to hope for from without, by way of change of scene, etc., and if I haven't my own work to fall back upon I am done for. But out of sheer vexation I dare not trust myself to begin again as yet.—

I would have sent you a part of *The Rhinegold* by now if it were not for a scoundrel of a copyist here who keeps me waiting for copy. * * *

It is a good thing that you are so enthusiastic about Fräulein Johanna Wagner.—You save me the trouble. * * * *

Why have you not included in the March from *Tannhäuser* (as a trio—like Liszt) the Entry of the Minstrels (G major) and the Page-boys (E flat major)? I thought you would grasp the complex of melodies as a whole picture. Otherwise there is no meaning in such an arrangement. The actual opera must be given up altogether.—Boom told me it ought to play well—but I did not see it.[3]— * * * *

267. TO THE SAME

[ZURICH, *early in September*, 1854.]

Herewith I send you a consignment of "*Rhinegold*"—how I wish it were coined!

This is about half. * * * *

You must be responsible for my score; don't let any of it get lost and see that I get it back soon. Lend it to no one. Say nothing

[1] Here a gap was left, owing to a scruple as to publication, in the letter as submitted for print, yet Wagner's unfavourable estimate of Hornstein is sufficiently known from *My Life*, pp. 612, 613.

[2] Vernacular for "Dresden." After his flight Wagner could not tolerate Dresden.

[3] This arrangement by Bülow of the *Tannhäuser* march was never published.

about it to Liszt—he is not to have it till it is quite finished. That will take some time as I can attend to the fair copy only incidentally; besides I am composing *The Valkyrie*.

Send me the pianoforte arrangement scene by scene, so that I can have it put in order here (with the libretto).— * * * *

Karl has had to help me somewhat now in money matters, but I am by no means at ease. I am very much afraid that my receipts this winter will not amount to much. (The *Northern Star*—Meyerbeer's—is opposed to me too—bad enough that I am fallen so low!!) If you should come across an enthusiastic man of means anywhere, tell him boldly that he would be doing me an inexpressible kindness if he would lend me 1000 thalers for a year (perhaps on a bill). * * * *

Brendel's notice on Hornstein [1] delighted me. I felt like Robert Schumann with Brahms. I suppose I must be going mad!—

Now then, send me your compositions, do you hear?

I think you are too hasty about Liszt. He certainly is not giving you up. On the contrary he often writes to me of you and very favourably. Apparently it touches him very closely. And, absurd as it may seem, he is not far wrong to congratulate you on your Polish [2] engagement. It is a crying shame, of course, that one has to spend all one's time seeking a roof to cover one. I hardly know what I am saying perhaps—but I find it harder and harder to retain my *Faith*.—

* * * You are the first actually to know anything of *The Rhinegold*. Don't set your expectations too high! It is wholly calculated for *actual performance*—never forget that!! It is really absurd to let such a thing be read. * * * *

268. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, STAYING AT DRESDEN

ZURICH, *6th October*, 1854.

* * * * Your visit to your supposed mortal enemy [3] in Waldheim does not in the least surprise me coming from you. For I

[1] "The young and talented composer, von Hornstein of Constance (a former scholar of the Leipzig Conservatoire), is at present living in Switzerland and has completed there a number of compositions (sonatas, etc.) in which Richard Wagner is said to have taken a lively interest" (*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, vol. xli. (1854), p. 76). See also No. 266. Schumann founded Brahms' fame in an article, "New Ways," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, vol. xxxix. (1853).

[2] Early in October 1854 Bülow went to stay with General Count Mycielski at Chocieszwice to teach his daughter music at a salary of 400 thalers a year, but on 17 December he agreed to become a teacher at the Stern Conservatoire in Berlin on 1 April, 1855.

[3] Minna could not forget that Röckel had drawn her husband into political activities which had deprived him of the post at Dresden, which meant so much to her.

know you, you see! Your heart is wider and more comprehensive than your insight into the essence of certain types of character, which naturally enough seem strange and antipathetic to you, for you Women are not to be expected to take the wide view of the facts of the world, reconciling what seems strange, as does the Man—the Poet. I have often found that your noble heart (which you think fit to call foolish and weak!) raises you above the ordinary run of women, so I am not to be surprised in this instance. Yet frequently I have to deplore from my heart that you do not add to this nobility of heart a wider insight, so that you might pass a calmer judgment upon much of my past, for example, and I regret this for your own sake, for conflict does not make for your peace of mind.—Well, it was fine and gallant of you to visit Röckel. I am not surprised at what you tell me of him. He has a nature as firm as iron. * * * *

269. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, CHOCIESZWICE

ZURICH, *26th October*, 1854.

* * * Your compositions have kept me very busy and interested. Yet from the beginning of our acquaintanceship I have felt the constraint of knowing that you expect a verdict from me which it is impossible for me to give. In the first place, how am I to get any clear notion of the thing? You know how abominably I play the piano, and that I cannot master anything by that means, unless I can form a clear conception beforehand; what I get from simple reading is not enough (compared with what I expect) to give me an idea of a composition. Now you will admit that your style is of a kind which refuses in every respect to be judged without cogent experience of the impression received from an actual performance of the work. Accordingly, I first took a look at you from the viewpoint of a pianist and then from that of an orchestra—an inconceivably good orchestra—to see how your work would shape. What I have managed to glean without these aids, the meagre picture which is all that I have been able to produce without them, I may not and cannot mistake for the work itself, and consequently must tell you that—you *still* owe it me to show me your works.—

If, however, I am to give my verdict upon what of comprehension I do believe myself to have attained in my simple way, you must be content with the following purely personal opinions.—

I was struck at once by your inventiveness; your talent for this is unmistakably great and shows itself especially in the earlier com-

position, the *Orchestral Fantasy*.[1] The thematic structure is great and comprehensive in idea and execution, and original in the *Fantasy* in particular, because proceeding entirely out of the subject-matter. The characterisation of the motifs is clear, yet not so decided in the *Cæsar Overture* as in the later *Fantasy*; at least, after my one laboriously achieved impression of the work, I am still unable — without being arbitrary — exactly to fit the motifs to particular subjects. * * * In both works, however, I admire your technique, in which, as regards difficulties of form both in detail and ultimate significance, you could not—in my opinion—be easily surpassed. Accordingly, I cannot but call you a Master and to my mind you can accomplish whatever you set out to do. If, as against this, I have any serious doubts (relating to matters of form), they attach to your attitude towards euphony in harmony. In this matter, I confess, my sole impression as yet is of extremely significant music played on instruments out of tune, and it is just here that I require the determinative sensuous impression of a really good performance before I can be rid of my fears. I know well from experience that even in musical representation there are subjects which cannot find expression save through harmonic motives which are bound to grate upon the ear of the musical Philistine. When, however, I perceived such in my own works, I was ever led by a definite impulse to disguise the harmonic harshness as much as possible and finally to manage so that (to my mind) they were no longer perceptible. Now I cannot get rid of the feeling that it is almost the other way round with you, that is to say, you prefer that harshness should be felt as harshness, and this strikes me most disagreeably where I see that the whole device manifests itself actually, solely in this harshness. * * *

You see, Hans, I really have been through similar stages, particularly in my earliest period as a composer when I made everything else a secondary matter till I lit upon a harmonic witticism of some kind. * * * In your case, now, I am surprised; you are certainly mistaken in yourself; you have far too much inventive power to be justified in taking serious pleasure in such paltry tricks.

And it is rather a cold, hard-hearted Jew-business, is it not, when others (as is a fact) notice nothing but the curiosities in what we have to say to them, and talk to us about them as if the thing itself were nothing.—

You see what a poor opinion I have of this kind of thing and

[1] *Nirvana*, published in revised form in 1866 as Op. 20. The music to *Julius Cæsar* (overture and march), published in 1867 as Op. 10, was remodelled by Bülow several times.

that I am convinced that my criticism of your work touches inessentials only, and not essentials. So do not take my verdict—although I will not admit that it has the value of such—as anything but most favourable to yourself. I do not recollect ever being so taken with any modern piece of music as with your *Fantasy* in particular, despite insufficient acquaintance.—Have you heard it? You do not tell me that.— * * * *

I have found a great treasure in the works of the great philosopher Schopenhauer [1] (deliberately ignored for thirty-five years by the professors). You must get his chief work at once, *The Universe as Will and Idea* * *; after that, *Parerga and Paralipomena*. * * * *

270. TO PRINCESS CAROLINE SAYN-WITTGENSTEIN, WEIMAR [2]

ZURICH, *November* 1854.

DEAR KAPELLMEISTERIN!

* * * * I have kept on working on *The Valkyrie* a little it is true, but it is going much more slowly than I thought it would at first. What I finally put down is always the best I can do; only the right moods for the work come more and more rarely in this dreary life of mine. As long as I wrote books and made verse, it did well enough, but for music I need another kind of life; I need Music herself; but I am like one who wants to kindle a fire and has the flame but not the necessary wood. Added to this, the subject of *The Valkyrie* affects me far too painfully; really there is not a sorrow in the world that does not find its most agonising expression herein.

But I have to pay for the artistic handling of these sorrows. I became quite ill again over it several times and had to give up altogether. I am now in Act II. at the scene where Brynhilde goes to Siegmund to tell him he must die—one can scarcely call this kind of thing "composition"!—If only I can get on to *Young Siegfried*; that will be a quicker matter, no doubt.— * * * *

271. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH, 16*th December*, 1854.]

* * I am coming to see more and more that you really are a great *Philosopher*!—while I by comparison seem to myself nothing but a cheapjack. Besides my—slow—progress with my music my sole preoccupation now is with a man who has come like a gift from heaven to me in my solitude—though only a literary one. This is Arthur Schopenhauer, the greatest philosopher since Kant

[1] See also No. 271 and that to Röckel, 5 February, 1855, and an undated letter to the same from London (No. 6 in *Wagners Briefe an Röckel*).

[2] *An Freunde*, p. 165.

whose ideas—as he himself expresses it—he is the first to have thought out to a conclusion. * * * Schopenhauer's main conception, the ultimate negation of the will to live, is terribly stern, but in it alone is salvation. Of course it was not new to me, and no one can conceive it at all save he in whom it is inherent, but nevertheless this philosopher is the first to awaken me to fuller consciousness of it. * * * *

For the sake of the fairest dream of my life, *Young Siegfried*, I must still, I suppose, finish the parts of *The Nibelungs*. *The Valkyrie* has exhausted me too much for me to be able to forgo this joy-making work. I am in the second half of the last act. I shall not have finished the whole before 1856—and in 1858, the tenth year of my hegira, I can produce it—if ever. And now, as I have never in my life tasted the true joy of love, I will set up a memorial to this most lovely of all dreams in which from first to last this love shall for once be satisfied utterly. I have planned out in my mind a *Tristan and Isolde*, the simplest yet most full-blooded musical conception; then I will wrap myself in the "black banner" which waves over its close and—die.— * * * *

272. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *19th January*, 1855.

* * To-day at last I can tell you something definite about London. A Mr. Anderson, treasurer to the Philharmonic (conductor of the Queen's orchestra), came specially to Zurich to arrange the matter with me. I was not pleased about it, for going to London and conducting Philharmonic concerts is not my *métier*. * * *

London is the only place in the world where it may become possible for *me* to conduct my *Lohengrin* again, as these stupid kings and princes of Germany have something better to do than to amnesty me. It might be an interesting task to win the sympathy of the English to the point of inducing them to enable me to establish an exquisite German opera there next year, under Court patronage, for the performance of my works under my own conductorship. I admit that I could find no better means to this end than by appearing there as director of the Philharmonic (the *old* one!) and, on the whole, could find no further objections to this sale of myself, although I fetched a very low price (two hundred pounds for four months). So at the beginning of March I shall appear in London at eight concerts, the first taking place on March 12th, the last on June 25th. * * * *

It's famous news that you have finished your *Faust*. You can

imagine with what incredible eagerness I look forward to it; but it is very dreadful that you will not show it to me sooner. * * *

Funnily enough, I have just been overcome with a great desire to revise my old *Faust Overture* again. I have written an entirely new score, orchestrated it afresh throughout, entirely altered much of it and added length and importance to the middle movement (second motif). In a few days I shall give it at a concert here and call it *A Faust Overture*.[1]

MOTTO

The god who dwells within my breast
Doth strongly stir my heart to love;
My powers are all at his divine behest
Yet outward things he cannot move.
This doth my spirit so with grief oppress
I long for death, my life is bitterness! [2]

But I shall not publish it under any circumstances.[3] * * * *

273. TO THE SAME

[ZURICH, 16*th February*, 1855.]

Here * * is my revised *Faust Overture*, which to you will look very insignificant beside your *Faust Symphony*. To *me* the composition is interesting only on account of the period in which it came into being, but its recent remodelling prejudiced me in its favour again and on this account I am childish enough to ask you to compare it very exactly some time with the first version, because I feel moved to express myself to you through this manifestation of my experience and of my gain in fineness of feeling. It seems to me that revisions of this sort [4] show most clearly what disposition a man has acquired and what crudities he has discarded. The middle movement will please you better now. Of course I could introduce no new motif as I should then have had to remake practically the whole work; all I could do here was to develop the mood a little

[1] See No. 231.

[2] Der Gott der mir in Busen wohnt,
Kann tief mein innerstes erregen;
Der über allen meinen Kräften thront,
Er kann nach aussen nichts bewegen;
Und so ist mir das Dasein eine Last,
Der Tod erwünscht das Leben mir verhasst!

[3] But see No. 273, note 2, p. 276.

[4] See, however, Wagner's well-known yet frequently misunderstood dictum *against* revised versions in a letter to Liszt, 8 September, 1852 (No. 223, last paragraph but one).

more broadly, in the form, as it were, of a fuller cadenza. Naturally there is no mention of Gretchen, it is still only Faust himself:

Some impulse sweet, mysterious
Through field and woodland urged me on.[1]

etc.— * * *

If someone were to *pay* me well for it, I might still be inclined to publish it; would you, I wonder, try that tough customer Härtel [2] with it for me; a little money would not come at all amiss for my journey to London so that I might be better able to save up there and get rid of some of my debts.— * * * *

The score for Act I. of *The Valkyrie* will soon be ready. It is extraordinarily beautiful; up to now I have done nothing even approaching it.— * * * *

274. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, CHOCIESZWICE

PARIS, *3rd March*, 1855.

* * * *—Liszt spoke very nobly about my London enterprise, for he too eschewed any thought of it as a financial speculation. The Brendel clique,[3] for instance, seem to think otherwise; their minds turned at once to the beloved *coterie*. Still, I had another good look at the Schumann symphonies with the honest wish to think them beautiful and worth propagating. Well, I have made up my mind about them now, and out of conviction I will *not* be bothered with them; they are simply another kind of jargon which looks like profundity, and in my estimation are just the same sort of empty nonsense [4] as the Hegelian philosophic twaddle which is always most trivial where it seems deepest. Where there *is* a glimpse of meaning and melody, it is Beethoven corporeally present, unmistakably father and mother both. Pray spare me all this stuff! I am more rigid than ever in my views and ask to be kindly excused when there is talk of the heroes of music of "the present age." How horrified the good clique would be if I were suddenly to tell them what I really think.—You arrange it better! *I hope you will!!* * * * *

[1] Ein unbegreiflich holder Drang
Trieb mich durch Wald und Wiesen hin.

[2] Breitkopf and Härtel accepted the *Faust Overture* for publication.

[3] Brendel's *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 1855: "This step on the part of England is surprising and may have important results. For Wagner will not undertake the conductorship of the Philharmonic Society without making artistic demands on that Society the fulfilment of which will exercise a most salutary influence on its programme."

[4] This is an unfair judgment. Even now (1925) conductors like Furtwängler and Bruno Walter perform Schumann symphonies with very great effect.

275. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LONDON [21*st March*, 1855].

* * * London is a very great and wealthy city and the English are exceptionally shrewd, circumspect and intelligent, but I, unlucky man that I am, have really nothing to do with them. * * * If I chose to be comfortably installed here as conductor of the Philharmonic for a number of years, undoubtedly I could easily get the appointment, for these people see that I am a good conductor, but that would be *all* the satisfaction I should get here; beyond that there is nothing. There is not the remotest prospect of arousing any particular interest (especially at Court) in my operas or in a good sound German theatre. The Queen's taste, for instance, is trivial to the last degree and sympathy with the unusual is the last thing likely from anyone here. You can see it is so from the very nature of the people. True art is something utterly foreign to them and they are not to be touched outside the sphere of income and expenditure. For instance, the equanimity with which these people listened to the singing of a wearisome duet thirty seconds after the close of the *Eroica*, was an altogether new experience for me; everyone assured me that no one was in the least scandalised by it—and the duet was applauded just like the Symphony! This by the way!—I placed all my hopes of satisfaction in my dealings with the orchestra, which is very devoted to me, and in the hope of a fine performance for its own sake. In particular I counted very much on being allowed *two* rehearsals for the next concert, as I hoped it would give me the opportunity of getting the orchestra really well in hand. But yesterday's first rehearsal dashed that hope as it showed me that *two* rehearsals are too few for my purpose. I had to pass over many important points and I see that I shall never be able to make up in just *one* more rehearsal, so I shall have to be satisfied with no more than a relatively good performance of the Ninth Symphony.

As to my compositions from *Lohengrin*, I have felt this time to my deep distress how wretched it is for me to have to keep on appearing before the public with such extremely meagre extracts from this work. I felt I was making myself ridiculous, for I know how little people can learn of me and my work from these sample snippets with which I go travelling round like a *commis voyageur*. And to think that I am wasting these my best years like this, utterly hampered and circumscribed in my artistic activities! I would far rather forgo every attempt at exterior activity, for no one but myself knows the torture I suffer by it! Under such conditions, my sole remaining satisfaction would be to have done

something for my lot on the practical side. I should be glad if I could do so, but how, short of stealing? How fat my purse will grow through my concert honorarium here, we have yet to see; in spite of my expensive lodgings I contemplate no actual extravagance and hope to save. But that's all, now and for ever! An Act of Parliament has been passed recently according to which there is no longer to be copyright in works which have already appeared abroad, but only in those written in England and for England and first published here. So the first thing to greet me here was an elegant translation of the *Star of Eve* and Lohengrin's *Rebuke to Elsa*, published by Ewer, and I am assured that a further complete selection of my vocal pieces is contemplated immediately. It appears that everyone has the right to reprint them at pleasure. Consequently I very much regret that I recently paid carriage for having these things sent to me for England.

Dearest friend, give up trying to make me "independent." All my life I shall be a ragamuffin—particularly according to English ideas—and accordingly can only hope no one will depend on me; anyone who does so will have a hard time of it. That's the long and the short of the matter. But perhaps I shall soon give up Art altogether, and in that case all will be well. It is that alone that from time to time fills me with illusions which can only result in evil for me. Periodically it induces a frivolous mood in me and, as you know, frivolity is good for no one, least of all for those who give themselves up to it. Only a little more, I assure you, and I shall have come to the point of putting a final stop to that particular source of all folly in my life. I have cause enough. The agonies my art inflicts on me far outweigh the rare enchantments it affords me. Only a little—only one thing indeed—and I give this game up too. Then—something will probably be done, but by other ways than most would be prepared to believe. * * * *

Apart from this, my dearest London acquaintance up till now is the first violin here, Sainton, a native of Toulouse, ardent, kind-hearted and lovable. My call to London is due to him alone. He has lived four years in close friendship with a German, Lüders. The latter has read my writings on art and became so predisposed to me that, to the best of his ability, he made them known to Sainton, and the two thereupon decided that there was no doubt of my being an able man. So when Sainton proposed me to the directors and had to say how he knew me, he lied and said he had personally seen me conduct, for, as he said to me—the true reason for his conviction about me would have been unintelligible to these people. After the first rehearsal, when Sainton embraced me ecstatically, I could not

help calling him a *téméraire* who might think himself lucky he had not caused offence this time! I like this man very much. * * *

A man like that in London among Englishmen is a perfect oasis in the desert. On the other hand, anything more offensive than the genuine English type I cannot conceive. They are one and all of the sheep-like type, and the Englishman's practical brains are just as reliable as the sheep's instinct for finding its fodder in the meadow. It finds its fodder, sure enough, but unhappily the whole fair field and the blue sky above are non-existent to its senses of perception. How wretched must he seem among them who, on the contrary, sees only meadow and sky but is bad at perceiving the yarrow!

I also very much like a young musician, Klindworth, introduced to me by Liszt. If the fellow only had a tenor voice I should carry him off willy-nilly, for in appearance, apart from his voice, he is a complete Siegfried.— * * * *

276. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

LONDON, *5th April* [1855].

Klindworth has just been playing me your great *Sonata*!—

We spent the day alone together; he dined with me and afterwards I made him play. Dearest Franz, you were indeed at my side! —The Sonata is beautiful beyond belief—great, lovable, deep, noble —sublime as you are yourself. I have been most profoundly affected by it and all this London wretchedness was suddenly forgotten. I can say nothing more to you just now—immediately after the performance, but I am as full of what I have said to you as a man may be. Once more—you were with me! Oh, could you actually be so in the flesh—and soon! Only so we could live beautifully!! Klindworth has amazed me by his playing; no lesser man than he could venture to play a work of yours to me for the first time. He is worthy of you—indeed, indeed!— * * *

277. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LONDON, *5th April*, 1855.

* * * * It may be true, perhaps, that the public were pleased with my music the other night—I find that is substantiated.— Very good, but there the matter ends! The most wearisome stuff pleases the public just as much as my music, and the next day performances of the most execrable kind will be applauded just like mine. * * * *

* * * Everyone who lives here is so firmly convinced of the

worthlessness, effrontery, venality and vulgarity of the press here that, to tell the truth, I do not care to soil my hands by so much as touching a newspaper. Those who know and possess a really independent opinion never mingle with this gang of Jews. * * * *

Oh, the lovely music they have here! I was recently at a concert of the New Philharmonic Society. There was a whole string of overtures, symphonies, concertos, choruses, arias, etc.—a perfect joy—all conducted by Dr. Wylde—click-clack, up to the end, which was fairly late—the public applauding as ever. And next day all the papers called this concert the finest of the whole season. Immediately following the second concert conducted by me, even reporters most favourable to me gave this concert the same praise as they gave mine. Don't you think I ought to send you these papers?

The real delight of the English, however, is the oratorio. In this their music becomes the interpreter of their religion—*passez moi le mot!* Four hours they sit in Exeter Hall, listening to one fugue after another in perfect confidence that they have done a good deed for which they will some day be rewarded in heaven by hearing nothing but the most beautiful Italian operatic arias. It was this earnest fervour in the English public that Mendelssohn understood so well, and he composed and conducted oratorios for them, till he has become the veritable Saviour of the English musical world. Mendelssohn is to the English just what Jehovah is to the Jews. And now Jehovah's wrath strikes my unbelieving self. * * * *

* * * I have almost entirely forgotten my composition [*The Valkyrie*] and often have to meditate a long time as to how I once meant this or that to go. I have completely lost the inner memory for it here. It was not till the day before yesterday that I very laboriously finished the first act and I now cherish the pleasant hope of finishing at least the second act here; the third, however, I must reserve for Seelisberg, where, unfortunately, I shall not be able to begin *Young Siegfried.* Happy shall I be if I rediscover my capacity for work there and pluck up courage again for *Young Siegfried.*

Believe me—I ought *not* to have gone to London! * * * *

278. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LONDON, 30*th April*, 1855.

What can I do to cheer you up, you poor invalid? * * * — Otto ought at once to get *Indian Sagas*, compiled by Adolf Holtzmann, Stuttgart, for you. I have brought them with me to London and the reading of them has been my sole delight here. They are

all beautiful, but—"Savitri" is divine and if you want to know what *my* religion is, read "Usinar." How these pure revelations of noblest humanity in the ancient East put our whole culture to shame!

Every morning now, before I begin work, I read a canto from Dante. I am still deep in the *Inferno*; its horrors accompany me as I work upon Act II. of *The Valkyrie*. Fricka has just departed and Wotan is to pour forth his terrible woe.

I shall certainly get no farther than this second act here; I can only work very slowly and every day I have to struggle against some fresh evil destructive of my creative mood. * * * *

My London experiences have decided me to withdraw altogether for the next few years from performing music in public; there must be no more of this concert conducting. * * * *

279. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, ZURICH

LONDON, *4th May*, 1855.

* * * * I thought I should get another £50 from Anderson after the fourth concert and in that case meant to send the 1000 frs. for Wesendonck to Sulzer forthwith—intending also to send the long letter I promised him. Anderson, however, seems to have forgotten it and as I have enough money to live on I would rather not remind him but go on waiting. Please say so to Sulzer, who, I hope, won't be so afraid of calling on a grass-widow as the "blameless" Wesendonck. Let us hope the good fellow doesn't suppose that it is only the husband's presence which prevents a woman carrying on all sorts of silly pranks with someone else. I'm sure he has no such sorry opinion of his wife, for instance, and, fortunately, neither have I of you, so I give you permission with all my heart to receive any visitor whom you find agreeable. This brings me to your account of the ill-repute into which Mme. Wesendonck is fallen with Mesdames M[arshall], H[eim] and B[aumgartner]. If the lady has really suddenly become so disagreeable that these people can't put up with her any longer it must be a bad case indeed, and I should be extremely sorry about it, for only a little while ago Mme. Wesendonck was universally thought a most amiable woman. To pity *him*—Wesendonck—for his wife's unpopularity, might certainly show charity to *him* but not to her; it is to defame her oneself, and I cannot think pity of this kind is genuine. But I hope you will set Mesdames H. and M. a good example and be lenient and indulgent towards eccentricities which may perhaps show themselves and may be really highly excusable and not so very terrible. Of course you are

not to be constrained either, and if you have a real antipathy to Mme. Wesendonck I myself should not account the thanks presumably due to her sufficient reason to oblige you to keep up an intercourse which is distasteful to you. If, however, your dislike springs from any sort of suspicion that your honour is involved, I believe I may assure you that this suspicion is entirely unjustified and baseless and that, on the contrary, you may be convinced that no one better deserves your confidence and your friendship than Mme. Wesendonck, just as I, despite all differences of character and talents, place a heartfelt confidence in *him*—as he does—with full justification I hope—in me.—I have so often made no answer to what you say about Mme. Wesendonck that I thought I ought to express myself rather fully this time, noticing, as I am bound to do, that a quite mistaken suspicion has, however naturally, put you out and warped your judgment. I hope you are not cross with me for this?—As for my grey hairs, tell the Wesendoncks of course, without fear of hurting my vanity, for although in your last letter you call me your handsome husband I have no great opinion of my beauty.—As to the "Uncle and Aunt" [1] I am sorry to say I have no secret to tell you. There is absolutely nothing in it. You know surely that I often have odd ideas that really mean nothing whatever. So, frankly, with the best will in the world I must leave your curiosity unsatisfied this time.— * * * *

* * * — But tell me, how did you come by the infamous idea that there is a bang on the gong in my *Tannhäuser Overture*? On my life I know nothing of it, and therefore with the best will in the world cannot omit it, which otherwise I would gladly have done to please you. If I am not mistaken, this gong-banging arose in Sulzer's head? That's what one gets by leaving one's wife alone with strange young men!— * * *

At the last concert we did a quite obscure and insignificant—early—overture by Weber to *The Ruler of the Spirits*.[2] I was quite astonished and annoyed that it was asked for *da capo* and could discover no reason for it whatever. Now, however, it has been explained to me. It was a deliberate public demonstration in my favour to compensate me, as it were, for Herr Lucas's having been received earlier with his dull symphony (being an Englishman and director of the society) with more applause than he really deserved. That is just like these people. The thing itself makes no actual impression on them and leaves them cold, as I saw plainly again afterwards in the effect produced by the A major symphony

[1] Wagner's nickname for the Wesendoncks, used occasionally in letters.
[2] *Geister-Beherrscher*.

[Beethoven's], but if they once get interested in a person they show it with a determination that looks almost like enthusiasm. So everything is calculated!

To revive another forgotten point, I may tell you that Ney's "Fidelio" left me very cold—a beautiful even soprano voice but the whole thing very mechanical and mannered, which I detest. Besides she is hideously ugly. The whole performance was bad. In particular, Costa quite misunderstood the tempi and dragged everything, but Formes was *very* good as Rocco. I could make use of him some day. * * * *

It is natural, after all, that you should have read no more about our concerts in the Zurich papers; that could not be kept up. The usual notices in the press here are short, and always disparaging or appreciative according to party. Moreover there has been nothing special for discussion and it was only because there was something new—Lucas's symphony—at the last concert that Davison wrote something in *The Times* again. Furthermore I did not have to conduct Spohr's *Nonet*, which he thought so poorly executed. I am told very funny stories of this Davison. There is no doubt that he has been bought by Meyerbeer's agent, the Jewish music dealer Brandus, to cry me down, and prevent my getting on here lest I should crop up in Paris afterwards. He certainly felt that he had given me more importance than he could have wished by his monstrous tirade against me in *The Times* and he may have heard of it from the editor, so he has since confined himself to venting his gall on me in his own little rag, *The Musical World*. To be able to criticise me thoroughly there, he went on to print in it a literal translation of the text of *Lohengrin*, which I am assured is not at all bad. This translation is now being generally read with the keenest interest and is creating quite a sensation, so that the silly fellow has played into my hands again. But I have been further assured that he—Davison—is himself quite entranced by the poem and recently told a friend of Lüders' quite unequivocally, that the man who wrote this libretto must be a very demi-god! Now what's to be made of that! Praeger says that it is just his way; he may be quite carried away by something and yet tear it to rags next day if his position requires it. Pretty tales! I have still to wait and see whether anything true and wise will ever be written about me; in any case the public will have no opportunity of getting to know me thoroughly. Meanwhile, however, I light upon something about the second concert from the *Spectator*. It is appreciative in so far as the man who wrote it could *know* anything of me. Please give it to Sulzer to satisfy him for the time being.— * * * *

280. TO THE SAME

LONDON—*I think the 8th May*, 1855.

* * Yesterday completed the ninth week of this dog's life of mine in London and seven weeks to-day I shall finish with its delights for ever. * * *

When I closed my last letter and asked myself again if I had forgotten anything, I remembered too late that I had not answered your question about the orchestra here. I intended to deal with the question at once in a letter to Boom, when I recollected that, after all, Sulzer might take it ill if I did not write to *him* before the other. So I will report on the question to *you* to-day. Unfortunately the orchestra of the Philharmonic Society, which is also that of the Italian Opera, consists almost entirely of—Englishmen; only one trumpeter, one trombone and a third man are Germans; Frenchmen, likewise only three; all the rest are true Englishmen. It is true there are a great many other German and French musicians here, but Costa, who had the appointment of the orchestra, always engaged Englishmen in his day to make himself popular. Now these gentlemen play quite well, have thoroughly mastered their instruments and can play anything that comes along, but—like machines, just like Geneva musical boxes. For instance, strictly speaking, their strength of tone is fixed and does not respond to shades of softness or loudness. The Parisian orchestra is far better. These Englishmen are wooden fellows and I would rather try to inspire enthusiasm in a German dance musician than in one of the dull creatures. Moreover I find it very hard to make them understand me; French, of course, is useless and when I want to explain minutely Sainton has to translate, except for a few short phrases that I have picked up, such as "Once more, please!" i.e. "*noch einmal!*" However, I am getting my reward here at last for my long sufferings with the bassoon in Zurich. The first bassoonist, a Belgian, is really exceptionally good, perhaps the best musician in the orchestra, excluding Sainton; he has often made me really happy. The oboist, though an Englishman, is also first-rate and particularly devoted to me. The clarinet, however, one of the directors, is bad and I liked Ott-Imhoff much better. (You can see that he is told that.) But I prefer Sainton by a long way to the good Hessian, Heisterhagen. He is the best leader I have ever had, not excepting Dresden. If ever I produce *The Nibelungs* he is to be in it. Last Friday he got up a quartet at his rooms in my honour with—Piatti, the first violoncello virtuoso in London. It was an enormous honour. To appreciate it one should know conditions here, and that these

gentlemen are not in the habit of handling their bows in the Season under £10.—

So much for the orchestra!—These last days I have had the pleasing occupation of studying the scores of the glorious works which are due for extra-rehearsal the day after to-morrow for performance in the ensuing concerts. Good English compositions—correctly worked out as examples in arithmetic, but without a trace of imagination or invention. You can imagine what a joy it is to me to be allowed to conduct these tone-poems! I am terribly bitter and I can only get along here and endure it with the aid of the most ferocious irony, which fortunately no one understands. * * * *

281. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

LONDON, 16*th May*, 1855.

* * * I am living here like a damned soul in hell! I did not think I should ever again be obliged to sink so low! It is impossible to describe how poorly I think of myself for putting up with conditions so repellent to me, and I realise that it was no less than a sin and a crime to accept this London invitation which must, even at the best, have led me far out of my true path. * * * —Neither does the orchestra offer me any compensation. * * * A public which —as I am assured on all hands—is very well-disposed to me and yet can never be carried out of itself! * *. Added to this, this ridiculous Mendelssohn cult, the whole brazen sanctimoniousness of this absurd people!

* * * I am increasingly losing all desire to work. I wanted to finish the score of *The Valkyrie* in the four months here, but there is no question of that any longer; I shall not even finish the second act, I am so horribly dispirited by my vile situation. I wanted to begin *Young Siegfried* at Seelisberg on the Lake of Lucerne in July, but I am now considering postponing this beginning till next spring!—

This disinclination for work is the worst of all; with it I feel as if eternal night were closing in upon me, for what else in the world is there left for me to do if I cannot work?

For company through this hell I have the study of Dante which I never achieved till now. * * *

Everything else also is perpetually going awry. Poor Klindworth has been very ill all the time, so that I have been deprived of the stimulus of being able to do things with him; he is a little better now but he cannot go for walks with me yet. Apart from him, my entire acquaintance is limited to Sainton * * and one Lüders who

lives with him. Both are on fire with devotion to me and do their very best to make my stay here pleasant. I often go to see Praeger, too—a good soul. Recently, a Mr. Ellerton, a rich amateur, has attached himself very warmly to me. He has heard my operas in Germany and has had my portrait on his walls these two years. He is the first Englishman who does not think much of Mendelssohn. He is a fine likeable fellow.—

Klindworth has done the pianoforte arrangement of Act I. of *The Valkyrie* and plays it famously. Unfortunately I have completely lost my voice here and cannot sing properly. * * * *You* will have to make up for it thoroughly next September; you are deeply in debt to me, you reserved fellow! If there is anything in my future which I can still look forward to as a pure pleasure, it is the introduction through you to your new compositions! Do not forget any of them! I congratulate you with all my heart on your *Mass*—it must be really splendid. May you have much joy of it at Gran![1] * * * *

282. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, ZURICH

LONDON, *22nd May*, 1855.

* * * * My longing for home is great, I assure you. I am restless and unhappy, and if you picture to yourself a caged tiger prowling to and fro, its only thought how to make its way out through the bars, you will have the very image of my daily disquiet. But rest assured that I do not blame you for having advised the London expedition. I cannot think that anyone would *not* have advised me to make it. It is only that *I* ought to have known better, and I am solely responsible for starting on a wild-goose chase which I have now, quite rightly, to pay for. If I were *only* a musician everything would be quite all right, but unfortunately I am something different and it is this that makes it so difficult to fit me into the scheme of things, and makes a thousand errors inevitable. I am a great nuisance, but this much is sure—I am not in this world to make money but to create. The world ought really to see to it that I could do *that* undisturbed, but admittedly the world cannot be constrained and does nothing but what accords with its desires and whims—very much as I should like to do all the time! So we two—the world and I—are two stubborn fellows at loggerheads, and naturally whichever has the thinner skull will get it broken—the probable reason of my frequent nervous headaches.—Now you, dearest friend, have

[1] Liszt was commissioned to write a festal mass for the consecration of the Cathedral of Gran, to be held in August. The consecration, however, was postponed for a year. The *Gran Festmasse* was not performed till 31 August, 1856.

come between us with the most excellent intentions—to ward off the blows no doubt. Only take care that some of them don't fall to you! * * * *

* * * I have received * * a tentative inquiry from New York [1] as to whether I would be disposed to go there—perhaps in two months' time—at the express invitation of a number of societies in order to carry on in person the propaganda of my works, which has already been begun by others with great success. So you see a second edition of London is being prepared. At any rate, I should not have to unpack at all in Zurich but should be able to go straight on to America. * * *

283. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

LONDON, *7th June*, 1855.

First of all, best of men, let me tell you of my amazement at your *immense productivity*! And so you have a "Dante Symphony" in your head now? And you hope to place it before me completed by the autumn? Don't take my amazement over this marvel amiss! When I look back on your activities these last few years you seem quite superhuman and there really is something very strange about it! * * * Well then—a *Divina Commedia*? That is certainly a most glorious idea, and even now I am enjoying your music in anticipation. Yet I have something to say to you about it. I do not doubt for a single moment that the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* will be successful; about the *Paradiso*, on the contrary, I have misgivings, which you are justifying already in my opinion by including choruses in your scheme. In the Ninth Symphony (as a work of art) the last movement with choruses is decidedly the weakest part; it is important merely in the history of æsthetics, because it discloses in a very simple manner the embarrassment of a true tone-poet who, after Hell and Purgatory, does not know how to represent Paradise. And indeed, dearest Franz, there is a very real difficulty about this Paradise, and who should show us that more plainly than Dante himself, the singer of the *Paradiso*, which is definitely the weakest part of his *Divine Comedy*. * * *

I am doing no more here than telling you faithfully of the impression made on me by the *Divine Comedy*, which, when it came to the *Paradiso*, I could only think a "divine comedy" indeed, in which I had no wish to take part either as comedian or spectator. The vexed question is always how, in this frightful world, beyond which there is only Nothingness, to infer a God who makes the vast sufferings of existence only a *seeming*, but who makes the longed-

[1] See end of No. 289.

for salvation from them something real and actual and consciously to be enjoyed. That may do very well for the Philistine—in particular for the English Philistine. He gets on excellently with his God by making a contract with him, according to the terms of which he, in return for fulfilling so many points in the agreement, will finally enjoy eternal felicity above, in compensation for various insufficiencies in this world. Only—what have we to do with such vulgar notions?— * * * *

284. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, ZURICH

London, *12th June*, 1855.

Good Lord, Mienel dear, I am quite hoarse with much talking to—*the Queen*! First she asked me how Peps was; then if Knackerchen [1] was being good, then if I was taking anything back for my wife. Finally she asked after Sulzer, and whether Baumgartner had really come to grief the other day; and so on incessantly. You can imagine, then, how much I had to reply and—well—I can't bring out another word to-day.

Don't think this just a joke—it is all in good earnest, and the Queen of England had a long conversation with me. Furthermore, I can assure you that she is *not* fat but very short and not at all pretty, with, I am sorry to say, rather a red nose. Still there is something uncommonly friendly and easy about her and although she is decidedly not a person of great weight, she is pleasing and amiable. She does not care for instrumental music and when she attends a concert so long as this * * she does so for her husband's sake, who goes in more for music and is fond of German instrumental music. This time, however, she seems really to have been impressed somewhat. Sainton, who kept his eye on her all the time from his place, declared that she followed my conducting and the pieces performed with quite unusual and increasing interest; she and Prince Albert were quite stirred by *Tannhäuser*, in particular. So much is certain, that when I turned round at the close of the overture, *both* applauded most heartily, smiling at me in a most friendly manner. Naturally the audience backed them up and this time honoured me with very marked, unanimous and prolonged applause. That was at the end of the first part of the concert, whereupon the Court withdrew to the refreshment-room, whither I was immediately summoned and first handed over to the Lord Chamberlain to be presented. I treated that lord very much *en bagatelle*, but I confess I was really touched when this kind and gracious Queen assured me quite simply that she was pleased to

[1] The pet parrot.

make my acquaintance, because I could not help remembering what my ostensible standing with her was—one that could not well be more difficult and embarrassing. Here was I, pursued by the police in Germany like a highway robber, difficulties made about my passport in France, yet received by the Queen of England before the most aristocratic Court in the world with unembarrassed friendliness; that is really quite charming! * * *

* * Although this evening cannot bring me any further general fame it has yet given me great satisfaction, so that I shall be able to leave London with reconciled feelings. * * *

This event has pleased me, chiefly on your account, for I know that news of it will be very agreeable to you. * * *

I make you a present of the whole incident herewith; do what you like with it. If it would give you satisfaction, let Marshall or Spyri hear part of my account, so that they can put something about it into their papers. * * *

* * * Greet all dear friends heartily from

Thy Knight of the Order of the Garter.

285. TO THE SAME

LONDON, *15th June*, 1855.

* * * * Yesterday I had a visit from Berlioz, who is tramping for his daily bread and is in a really bad way. He cannot earn a sou in France and so has to try to eke out a scanty livelihood by concerts (which—as I know—bring him in very little) in England and Germany. He has been invited here by the "*New* Philharmonic" for two concerts. He has arranged things with the press here already, he, too, having been terribly torn to pieces by it at the beginning. Besides his *Romeo and Juliet Symphony* he has also conducted a Mozart symphony [G minor] which he let them murder so abominably that I made off. But that is quite English; they like it so, and Berlioz, who is only after money, knows what he must do. Besides he lacks all *depth*. * * * *

286. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *5th July*, 1855.

* * * * I have been back in Zurich since June 30th after conducting my last London concert on the 25th. You have probably learned already that little Victoria was very nice to me? She came to the seventh concert with Prince Albert. * * But I really seem to have pleased the Queen very much; she conversed in so kindly and *friendly* a manner that I was really touched by it. These two were veritably the first people in England who ventured to speak out

openly and undisguisedly on my behalf, and when one remembers that they had to do with one guilty of high treason, politically discredited and a hunted outlaw, I shall probably be allowed to be right in feeling heartily grateful to them both.—

At the last concert both the audience and the orchestra made a demonstration against the London critics. * * * That there could be no question of any triumph in *my* sense, is understood. At best no one can get to know me fully in the concert-hall, and it was impossible to achieve even this "best" (performances answering fully to my intention, I mean), mainly for lack of time. Consequently all I ever had was a bitter sense of degradation, enhanced by the fact that I was forced to plough through whole concert programmes of the most repulsive length and always tastelessly and senselessly put together. The reason that I conducted these concerts to the end was, ultimately, sheer consideration for my wife and a few friends, who would have been much distressed by the consequences of a sudden departure from London. I am glad now that the matter has ended favourably, at least to outward appearances. * * The *New Philharmonic* would like to have me next year; what more can I ask?—

I have gained one really good thing in England—a sincere and warm friendship which I conceived for Berlioz and which we have struck up mutually. I heard a concert of the New Philharmonic under his conductorship * *. A few days later we were alone at table with Sainton. He was very lively, and the progress I had made in London in the French tongue enabled me to discuss all the problems of art, philosophy and life in rapid discourse with him at a five hours' sitting. I accordingly conceived a very deep sympathy for my new friend; to me he became quite a different person from what he used to seem; we suddenly discovered each other as companions in suffering, and I thought myself on the whole happier than Berlioz.—After my last concert he visited me again with the rest of my London friends; his wife was there too; we were together till 3 o'clock in the morning and parted this time after warm embraces.— * * * *

287. TO LOUIS SCHINDELMEISSER, DARMSTADT

SEELISBERG, CANTON URI, 30*th July*, 1855.

* * * I have been much interested by what you tell me of Tichatschek,[1] although it fills me with melancholy, too, to see from this very instance of the sensation caused by T.'s achievements, in

[1] Tichatschek as the first "Rienzi" and as the first "Tannhäuser" was vocally unsurpassable. He had been "starring" in Darmstadt and had made a great hit.

how bad a way we must be for tenors to-day. No one who sees and hears one of these people again—infrequently (like me)—can conceive how problems—such as mine—are to be even approximately solved by such eunuchs. In this respect, too, the outlook for my operas is a gloomy one in Germany, so that I am often afraid of suddenly being amnestied and finding myself in a position to share in sight and hearing of this distressing state of things! * * *

What you write of Mannheim has naturally pleased me much. [Vincent] Lachner visited me here in Zurich last winter and I found him a sensible, able, though completely uninspired person. Your account of his performance [*Lohengrin*] confirms this impression. Wherever you deviate from him in the direction of my opera —particularly in the overture—simply take it for granted that *you* are in the right. Upon the subject of conducting in general, my views are becoming more and more definite, and I am firmly convinced that only *very few* have the gift for conducting the intelligent work of others so as to do full justice to it. In this, as, after all, in everything, one must be a bit of a genius if one is not to be utterly commonplace.— * * *

I am recovering now in the mountains—unfortunately in bad weather—from my London expedition * *. I am at work again now!—When am I to get a sight of you again?? * * *

288. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

[ZURICH, *September* 1855.]

* * * * Here is the programme for the *Tannhäuser Overture*.— I have not written a programme to any Beethoven symphony except the third and the ninth.—The *Faust Overture*, which will shortly be published in a revised form, has an intelligible motto.— * * *

Could you, do you think, busy as you are, manage to fit in the making of a pianoforte arrangement from *The Rhinegold*—and that without too great delay? It is still being copied out at present, but if you could set quickly to work I should be able to have the first half sent you now. Otherwise—if you find it a burden [1] (which I shall certainly not take amiss of you) Klindworth has offered to do it and he has already played the score through to me very finely.— * * * *

289. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH], *3rd October*, 1855.

* * To-day I am sending you the finished first two acts of *The Valkyrie*. It is an *intense* satisfaction to me to know that they will

[1] Bülow had no time. See also Nos. 290, 291.

presently be in your hands, for I know that there is no one so sympathetic to my work as you. *I* am apprehensive about the weighty content of Act II. It comprises two crises, so powerful and significant that it would really provide sufficient matter for two acts, yet the two are *so* interdependent, the one leads so directly up to the other, that it would be quite impossible to separate them. If it is only presented as I require—if all my intentions are fully understood—it must certainly cause a quite unprecedented wave of strong emotion. But a thing like this is really only written for such as have some staying power (that is for no one!); I cannot be influenced by the fact that the weak and incapable will complain. However, whether everything has turned out well—even according to my intention—is for you to judge; I could not do it differently. In dispirited and dispassionate hours I was most afraid of Wotan's great scene and especially of his revelation of Fate to Brynhilde; indeed in London I came to the point at one time of wanting to discard the scene altogether. To make up my mind about it I took up the draft again and went through the scene to myself with all the necessary expression. Happily I found by this means that my spleen was unjustified and that, on the contrary, the appropriate rendering produced a truly musical and enthralling effect. In certain passages I have indicated this rendering more precisely, yet much remains to be done and it will be a capital task some day for me to initiate some talented singer and actor into the very heart of my meaning by word of mouth. *You*—I have a confident hope of it—will see to the heart of the matter at once. It is the most important scene in the course of the whole great tetralogy and as such probably will soon arouse the necessary interest and remark. * * * *

I have an increasing hope that I shall have quite finished the last act by Christmas. * * *

* * * You probably know that Semper has an appointment here now. He gives me great delight—an artist through and through and at the same time more likeable as a man than formerly—but as fiery as ever. Karl Ritter is settling here now also. I like him better than ever; his sagacity is immense and I know no young man like him. He really loves you greatly and moreover understands you very well.—

I recently had an answer from Berlioz to a letter of mine in which I asked him, among other things, to make me a present of all his scores if he could obtain them gratis. This he cannot do now, as his former publisher will not let him have any more free copies. I confess that it would greatly interest me now to go through his *Symphonies* carefully with the scores; have you got them and will

you lend them to me? Or would you even give them to me? I would be very grateful—but I should like to have them soon.— * * * *

America is a horrible nightmare to me. If the New Yorkers should be able to make up their minds some time to offer me a respectable sum I should really be in a dreadfully embarrassing position. If I were to refuse it I should not dare to tell a living soul, for everyone would accuse me of lack of the sense of what is due to my situation. Ten years ago I could have undertaken something of the kind, but *now* to go so far out of my way merely for the sake of a living would be hard indeed—now, when I am just prepared to achieve and to devote myself to what is truly and strictly my *métier*. I should never in my life be able to finish *The Nibelungs*. God in Heaven! as for those sums which I might "earn"(??) in America, people ought to *give* them to me, without asking anything else of me but to do what I am doing, and which is the best thing that I can do. * * * *

290. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

ZURICH, *4th October*, 1855.

* * * * To-day I am sending Liszt the finished fair copy of the first two acts of *The Valkyrie*, which I have made out with customary neatness and thick red lines between the score groupings. This is as much as my industry has accomplished hitherto. Now I am beginning the third act and hope to have a fair copy of this finished by the time Liszt comes to see me. I am sending you all that is left with me of the whole after that fair copy, the instrumentation drafts, to which, no doubt, your piercing and re-integrating glance is well accustomed. The second act has taken some sixty pages, which you might perhaps begin now, as occasion offers, to mint into ringing pianoforte coinage. If the paper scrawled over by me amuses you, keep it in exchange for what you write so well and suitably for the pianoforte—as a memento.

For the rest, out of consideration for you, it has at last struck me to give up pencil and take to ink. You shall have the last act all in ink, which I hope will be a strong enticement to you to do the arranging of it. I have inquired of Bülow, who formerly *asked* to do these arrangements, whether he could be *quick* about it, and with his present music-school activities he naturally had to decline. If you like, I will send you *The Rhinegold* to work upon at the new year. But before then you shall have the last act of *The Valkyrie*—in instalments—so that you will if possible have finished with it by the time Liszt comes. All that I can offer you for this laborious

work is the assurance that I will get a proper honorarium for you from the future publishers, if I should some day publish the whole work. Will you be content with this distant prospect?—

What you have sent is being well and fairly copied.— * * * *

291. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

ZURICH, *5th October*, 1855.

* * * * —*The Rhinegold* is again—or I should say still—at the copyist's in Dresden. To be frank, I am unwilling to burden you with the task of making the pianoforte arrangement. Klindworth is merely a pianist and—rightly no doubt—does not wish to be otherwise. As such (unluckily) he has little to do in London and so can and will do work of this kind gladly and with speed.

With you the case is exactly the contrary; the fact that you are very much occupied as a *pianist* is, after all, in itself a constraint upon you which you ought to strive against with all your might so as to leave room in your soul for productivity as a *composer*. I would not like to do anything more to block your path in this direction. You shall have my new scores to look through at leisure as soon as I can spare them; apart from Liszt, Röckel (at Waldheim) shall be your only rival for them. But it will really ease my mind to know that in the reading of them you will not see yourself at once impelled to exercise your functions as a pianist again. Believe me and my sincerity when I tell you this.—If you would like to do me one more favour as *arrangeur*, I shall perhaps ask you soon for a good arrangement of the *Faust Overture* which, however, you would have to let me have *gratis*, because it is only on this condition that I would get Härtel's to print it; they have already sent me an arrangement in the old style to look through, which I had to refuse, offering, on the contrary, to see to one myself * * which I would almost beg them to print.

For the rest, do gladden my heart some time with a new composition! Unless you have completely misunderstood me, what I said to you about your overtures [1] can only have encouraged you. I have not yet had a glimpse of your recently published pianoforte compositions; only Baumgartner spoke well of them to me. I cannot form an opinion on things of that kind unless I hear them; accordingly I rest my hopes on Liszt who will certainly play them to me.— * * * *

[*15th October.*]

But just risen, as I am, from a sick-bed,[2] where I have lain for a considerable time, I find myself obliged to write to you again

[1] See No. 269. [2] See Nos. 293–5.

without knowing where you are staying or whether you will answer.—

It concerns the *Faust Overture.*

I would not trouble you with it, and above all would not require of you work which is to be published by Härtel's—*not* under your name and without fee for you—were I not in the really embarrassing position of being otherwise unable to prevent Härtel's issuing a bad arrangement, which they pretend suits *their* purpose. Furthermore I know that you have already arranged the earlier version of the same overture, so that you would have a minimum of labour in effecting what I want done.—I am now extremely pressed and must deliver the arrangement speedily. Consequently I beg you to let me know *by return* whether you can fulfil my request or not. * * *

* * * So make the pianoforte arrangement (for four hands, of course) at your discretion—that is to say, deal freely with the score as is always necessary to make the *composition*—the musical concept, that is—clear. (It was just this necessary freedom of treatment of which Härtel's *arrangeur* had not the least conception.) Make it with a view to what it will *sound* like, not to what it will *look* like. And moreover don't make it difficult; that is to say, no intricate daring passages which disconcert people and make them think it is written only for platform performers. * * * *

292. TO PRINCESS CAROLINE SAYN-WITTGENSTEIN, WEIMAR [1]

ZURICH, *2nd November*, 1855.

I have just risen from a sick-bed [2] where I have lain for a considerable time! * * *

* * * If you have not the courage to visit me in winter I would beg you not to prevent Liszt from doing so, for, believe me, I am *pining* for him and have put extreme constraint upon myself not to ask him before Christmas. As I have been prevented from working now for several weeks by illness, I cannot say with certainty whether I shall have quite finished the last act of *The Valkyrie* by Christmas, yet I would not for the world have Liszt's visit postponed on that account; on the contrary, I am already deeply regretting having delayed his suggested visit by some months for worthless considerations of that kind—for it is more important for me to receive than to give. If you ladies could finally decide to visit me in the spring or summer, it would be a question of whether or no I was

[1] *An Freunde*, p. 177.

[2] See Nos. 293–5.

still to be found in the land of the living; if Liszt were to visit me before then it would certainly contribute to my being so.—

Ah, dearest friend, there are far too many words in this world and far too few deeds! I say this not with bitterness but with sorrow! Well, then, I assure you that if I were *free* I should most certainly spend at least half the year in Weimar, simply to be with Liszt. I am so certain of it that it almost seems a natural corollary to me to expect Liszt, as *he* is the free one of us two, to come now and live with *me*. Looking at the matter quite soberly, it does really seem to me a monstrous waste of life to live so wedded to outward routine and not to regulate both one's residence and way of living entirely according to the more important relations of life. How soon the few years of life still appointed us will be at an end, and how much, when that end comes, we may regret having lived so much among asses and dogs instead of with the people whom we could really care for! I, at least, know that almost all my wretchedness would vanish if I could live with Liszt, and perhaps I could be something to Liszt too. Well, I *cannot* come to him—but he *could*, very well, come to me; and you—would you stay behind? Or are you wrapped up in Weimar?—

I am speaking quite seriously and bewailing loudly that I am not *that* to Liszt which I would wish to be. * * * I—mean to assert by that, that Liszt is more to *me* than *I* to him—which, after all, is natural enough perhaps!—

As you see, I am giving rein to my mood and this is one of sheer despair—for I realise that I am to be left to go to *ruin—ruin* in the fullest sense of the word. You will all realise it too late. Well, I can have nothing to say if the "*world*" lets me perish; but that you don't even feel it, *that* does make the desolation about me an agony.— * * * *

293. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *12th December*, 1855.

I am just rising tentatively from the sick-bed in which I have just spent another three weeks.

Karl Ritter has told you of my condition, my thorny existence has now blossomed in "roses" [1]—I am suffering from repeated attacks of erysipelas of the face. At best I shall not be able to go out of doors again this year, and I shall have to spend the whole winter in constant fear of relapses, for the slightest excitement together with the least chill is certain any moment to lay me on my back again for two or three weeks. * * * *

[1] German *Rosen* (roses) = erysipelas.

294. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

ZURICH, 19*th December*, 1855.

* * * Please let me know briefly, but by return, whether you have time to do the pianoforte arrangement from *The Rhinegold* quickly and promptly? If you can, I will send you the score at once, with part of *The Valkyrie* score at the same time. The reason why I cannot send you the latter quite complete is that I have been constantly ill for the last two months and actually bedridden most of the time; I have had to give up work entirely all the while. You can judge accordingly how good-humoured I feel. I had to put off Liszt who was to visit me now, and I expect him in the spring.— * * *

295. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, 29*th December*, 1855.

* * * * This really has been so utterly wretched and lifeless a year again that there is scarcely anything in it I care to remember. I suppose I ought to have answered Emilie's letter when I was in London, but when one answers a letter one must write about something and what could I write about from London which wasn't better unwritten about? And this London seems to have pursued me the whole year through. When I returned my little old dog [Peps] welcomed me with another week of life, just to show me he had been waiting for me, but then he died. We spent two whole days by the poor faithful beast's basket; he was always getting up to drag himself to the chair where I work—and didn't see me standing close to him. I carried him down in a box and buried him in a meadow. That was another shrewd blow for me!—Then at Seelisberg we had nothing but bad weather and dull company. Fortunately I had one day of rejoicing over Julie[1]! Scarcely had I settled down to work a little in Zurich when the "roses"[2] upon the thorns of my existence began to bloom, fading often, but budding again as often and I had, like a good gardener, to give them almost three months of uninterrupted attention. And I have still not managed to put my big child *The Valkyrie* to sleep.

There you have a rich year of a rich life, the only benefit of which has been to make it plain to me afresh that the whole purpose of life is to become a weariness.—Still, I have to mention Karl's arrival in Zurich as something good which has happened to me. I am glad that he has succeeded at last in escaping from his political homelessness[3] and I shall be still better pleased if he likes it here

[1] Julie Ritter—the daughter. [2] German *Rosen* (roses) = erysipelas.
[3] Karl Ritter was born in Narva and had only just naturalised as a Swiss.

for a time, as I shall then have him near me. In the year since last I saw him he seems to me to have altered greatly for the better; he makes the same impression on all here who used to know him. Even though he will probably always remain something of an oddity, he will have the right to do so, as he really is something out of the ordinary. * * * *

296. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

ZURICH, 10*th January*, 1856.

* * I dispatched the score of *The Rhinegold* to you some days ago. * * *

You will soon receive the last act of *The Valkyrie*—which you can finish after *The Rhinegold*; if you were to complete it by Easter I should naturally be very pleased.

I thank you again heartily for your last package; it pleases me very greatly to know that this piece, difficult in so many parts, is already arranged so beautifully!

I am just beginning work again and think at last I shall really be finished in February. Whether I go on working then depends on whether the right mood and some fortunate change of circumstances make it possible for me to do so.

The first performance of *Tannhäuser* in Berlin took place recently. —Liszt telegraphed that it had gone pretty well.— * * * *

If you would like the rough drafts for *The Rhinegold* as well, I will send them with my next package.— * * * *

297. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, 28*th March*, 1856.

* * * * Well then—you shall have my roughly drafted studies for the last act [of *The Valkyrie*] in the next few days. I have been interrupted in it countless times and recently again by a long recurrence of this detestable erysipelas. As I write down nothing except what finally satisfies me in the right mood, you can easily imagine how much time I have needed from which to select the rare right hours. But you will be amused by the last act; it was done at a sitting!

Be glad to think, too, that there will be no more score-sending for a considerable time. Many good things must come my way to put me in the right humour to go on working—and yet in the end I suppose I shall begin again sooner than I would wish!!—

I am still having much trouble over the copying out of your

arrangements, but what is finished is now lying neat and clear, ready for Liszt whom I expect soon.

Have you finished *The Rhinegold*? That would be famous! * * *

298. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

ZURICH, *5th April*, 1856.

* * * * And now I have an important piece of business to propose to you, which I should be glad to hear you were very willing to enter into. It concerns the publication of the collected "theoretical papers" of my friend Theodore Uhlig, unfortunately deceased at such an early age, which I feel impelled to set on foot as an act of friendship for the dead man. It is a duty all the more agreeable to me in that I am convinced that I shall thereby confer a valuable benefit upon the musician and the musical public.

To this end I have had sent me the posthumous manuscript, and writings published in newspapers by Uhlig, and am in a position to use as much unprinted as printed material for the publication. Above all, there is, among the unprinted matter, a big work entitled *The Choice of Motif and the Manner of its Execution in the Composition of larger Instrumental Works. A practical treatise.* Without being conscious of the least exaggeration, I feel compelled to regard this work (which is pretty comprehensive and circumstantial) as one of the most important, and in many respects perhaps the *most* important, of the treatises on art which have appeared hitherto. Without any sort of controversial matter, it covers the important field of motif-formation, with a particularly clear demonstration of differences which occur herein between Beethoven and his predecessors; and it gives, together with the clearest analysis of the process in question, the most practical and effective introduction to original motif-formation, so that it may reasonably be taken also as a most helpful work of instruction. * * * —Besides this principal work, I have chosen out the most important of the longer articles already published in the newspapers, with special care to exclude entirely everything controversial or personal so that only the purely scientific essence of the work should be retained for this publication. I would introduce the whole with a foreword in which I should likewise avoid any and every reference to disputes which are now utterly distasteful to me, so that the works would appear merely as a very substantial contribution to musical science and æsthetics.—

* * * The honorarium would naturally go to Uhlig's widow, and for the very reason that I have the good object in view of

contributing to her support, I am obliged to ask you to make a really generous offer.[1]— * * * *

299. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *13th April*, 1856.

* * * * I have decided * * to apply to the King of Saxony for a pardon, and to do so by means of a document [2] in which I shall frankly confess my too great precipitancy and moreover assert—giving my exact motives—that my promise never in any way to meddle in political matters again is made from the very bottom of my heart. The regrettable aspect of the thing is, that in case of determined hostility on the other side, such a letter might easily be made public in some way or other, in which event I might be forced to make public protest against some false and humiliating interpretation of my action, thus causing a disastrous breach which might render reconciliation impossible for all time. Upon mature consideration, therefore, I still think it would be best if my petition were to be conveyed to the King by word of mouth through some third person. But as far as my own ease of mind and my sole hope of success is concerned, this can only be done by—*yourself* * *. Accordingly I put the critical question to you to-day. Will you undertake to ask an audience of the King of Saxony, introduced by a letter from the Grand Duke of Weimar [3]? I have no need to coach you in what you should say to the King at such an audience; but we should certainly agree that, in the plea for my pardon, all possible stress should be laid on the fact that I am *an artist*, in order to excuse and explain my political excesses on that ground, and upon that of my individual temperament as an artist, and have this taken into consideration as the only reason for my pardon. As to the act of excess itself, and its consequences lasting over some years, I am ready to admit that I now feel myself that I was in

[1] The firm rejected this proposal and Wagner's plan was abandoned. The "Musical Papers" issued in Uhlig's lifetime were eventually published in Gustav Bosse's *Deutscher Musikbücherei*, vol. xiv., in 1914.

[2] This document (undated: May 1856) is in *Briefwechsel zwischen Wagner und Liszt* (Wagner–Liszt Correspondence), vol. ii., p. 328 (3rd ed.). On 5 May, Wagner was asked by Liszt to dispatch it at once. See also No. 307. Wagner recapitulates its contents in another document, also a petition for pardon, to the Crown Prince of Saxony, dated 20 February, 1858, printed by Johann George in *Herzog zu Sachsen: König Albert von Sachsen*, pp. 103–9 (Leipzig, 1922). It is mentioned there that King Johann gave Wagner's petition to his Minister of Justice, who informed Wagner that he was giving it his favourable consideration.

[3] Liszt did not approach the Grand Duke but persuaded the Grand Duke Karl Alexander to write a letter (*Deutsche Rundschau*, January 1925) on Wagner's behalf, in April 1856, to the King of Saxony, who, however, rejected the petition on 25 April (*ibid.*).

error and carried away by passion, although I am not conscious of having actually committed the crime attributed to me in the sentence passed by the Court upon me and it must, therefore, be difficult for me to admit its justice. As to my future conduct, however, I should be ready to make any binding declaration required of me in evidence of my purified and emended judgment, which at present shows me the things of the world in a light in which I did not see them formerly, and which is now in every respect my guide in matters of my art, but which will never more lead me into any field of political speculation. Apart from this, you might also have to give assurance that my return to Germany should not be the occasion of any kind of demonstration, a thing which, even should it be directed *solely* to the artist, might easily be interpreted by ill-wishers as being of a political nature. Fortunately, as an *artist* I have arrived at a stage at which I have in view *only* my art and its perfection and in no sense the applause of the mob. * * * I should not even mind, in the event of one of my operas being performed, whether I conducted it personally, but should only care to ensure that the performers and the conductor had the right interpretation by assisting at rehearsals. * * * For the rest, I undertake in my writings—even in those of a purely æsthetic nature—to avoid anything that might be misleading or even provocative, such as formerly may have escaped me in my excitability.— * * * *

* * * Were the King to reject my petition, there still remains open the possibility of mediation through one of the *Prussian* [1] ministers (who has been proposed to me for this eventuality); yet I do not rely much upon this, while I expect everything from you and your personal intercession.— * * *

300. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *28th April*, 1856.

* * If you only knew how sad it makes me never to get any good news of those ceded publishing royalties! [2]

Friend Fischer recently told me of Meser's death, with the idea that the news would determine me to take steps in Dresden; naturally, however, I left this to your advocate who, being on the spot, would doubtless be in a position to do whatever was best. Yet I thought * * I should soon have had news, instead of which

[1] Wagner was in touch with the Prussian Court, particularly with Princess Wilhelm; later on with the Empress Augusta, through Alwine Frommann.

[2] The royalties on the sales of the operas *Rienzi*, *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser* had been ceded by Wagner to his Dresden creditors Hiebendahl, Kriete and Dr. Pusinelli.

I have just received another threat [Henniger's] of being sued here for a debt, for which at one time he agreed to be referred to that undertaking. This shows me that things must be very wrong!!—Really, it is hard to find myself treated thus in view of the misfortune which has overtaken this one meticulously guaranteed and unique piece of property. * * * I am living here abroad on nothing but the kindness of certain friends to whom I have rendered no direct service at all. My profits from the theatres, which will also shortly come to an end, have served to provide me with a home again after years of fugitive wandering and also to ensure the changes, etc., necessary for my health.

You have no idea how these everlastingly recurrent calamities wear me out, particularly now, when I want life to run at its smoothest so that I can get courage and the right mood to finish my great work [*The Ring of the Nibelungs*], despite the fact that my health grows worse and worse. I have spent half this winter in bed. I am resting all my hopes in the spring and summer—if only I could get real peace and quiet! * * *

Forgive me this digression! I know that no one is more my well-wisher than yourself! If all goes well and I am still alive, my completed work, in the form of a great Stage Festival, ought, I think, probably to be shown to the world at Zurich in a temporary theatre built for the purpose. * * *

Please give my kindest regards to poor Kriete, who really is most patient, humane and generous-minded!

301. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, ZURICH

MORNEX, *Wednesday, 11th June,* 1856.

* * * * My malady really has advanced terribly. Last winter it sometimes vanished altogether and I was free of it for weeks at a time, but now I am in dread of a fresh outbreak every hour and feel the wretchedest of men. This must be altogether changed somehow, and I am doing everything that gives me any promise of it. Dr. Coindet assures me that the strictest dieting and rest are the principal aids. * * *

To sing Fips' praises I should need another whole sheet of note-paper—the little beast [1] is so touchingly well-behaved, friendly, obedient and reliable! As the train left Zurich he (sitting on the little table) suddenly began to howl and kept looking in the direction in which you had vanished; he took no notice of me, whatever I chose to say to him. He settled down when I got into the

[1] This little dog was given to Wagner by Frau Wesendonck to replace Peps who had died soon after his return from London.

diligence and behaved so sensibly and obediently and made himself so unnoticeable throughout the journey that I cannot possibly praise him enough. * * *

302. TO THE SAME

MORNEX, *Thursday, 19th June*, 1856.

* * * Dearest Minna, Natalie *must* go, there's nothing else for it. Rather put up with anything than with this everlasting hourly-recurring provocation which is bad for you and absolutely embitters my life. It is totally impossible to accustom her to be with us, and it would be a misfortune for *her* as well as for *us* if she were to remain longer. I cannot tell you how our home life is ruined for me by this perpetual annoyance, the results of which I partly see in you and partly feel myself. I can no longer bear this eternal scolding, for which, unfortunately, there is perpetual reason; you are injuring your health by it and Natalie is being hardened by it and estranged from us. God knows what her future is to be, as she is so utterly incapable in household duties. But one thing I am sure of—that she will get on better and be herself more contented under other social conditions—as at Zwickau perhaps. All the same she is not to be abandoned by us and I accordingly pledge myself to pay her permanently the 100 frs. quarterly which your good parents used to receive. This shall be absolutely fixed, and in this way, I think, she will be a burden to no one, and even the Trögers will certainly be willing to take her into their household on these terms. I beg you to make it your chief business now to settle this affair and, if possible, get rid of her before I return, for I swear to you that this unrest and annoyance at home is a terrible strain upon me. If my circumstances improve at all—to which end I shall devise means—we shall no doubt soon find a suitable young person to take the place we intended for Natalie. You might as well begin now to think about it and I am sure you will soon find the right person and that any capable girl might congratulate herself on stepping into so pleasant a relationship as might have been Natalie's if she had only possessed *some* qualifications for it.—Well, now, you know my opinion!— * * * *

303. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

MORNEX, NEAR GENEVA,
20th June, 1856.

* * I think it is now time to come to terms with you about the future publication of my "Nibelung" dramas—or whatever I am

to call the whole. As long ago as 1852 you mentioned the matter in a letter and expressed a wish to know that I was reserving this work for publication by you. Naturally I could not say anything further at that time, since even the poem was not completely finished. I have since been obliged to have a few copies of the poem printed (for the purpose of distribution to friends) at my own expense. * * * —Since then I have proceeded so far as to finish the composition of the first two pieces. * * * *The Rhinegold* and *The Valkyrie* are fully scored and ready for performance. This summer, as soon as my health has been (as I hope) fully restored, I am eager to set *Young Siegfried* to music and next year the concluding piece, *Siegfried's Death*, should be also completed, so that I am counting definitely on the whole being finished by the summer of 1858. Accordingly I have settled on the summer of 1859 for the first performance. * * *

I am hoping to have achieved in my *Nibelungs* a popular and national work in the noblest sense of the word, and am of opinion that even the poem will not be without general interest of a serious kind for the nation. I have been told by experts that the difficulties of an actual staged representation may easily be overcome; nevertheless I could only allow a first performance to take place under special conditions and to this end I propose to arrange a great Dramatic Musical Festival (I can think of no term more in accordance with ordinary usage), for which I propose to assemble the best personnel I can get together at some well-chosen spot and give with them, in the course of several summer months, a series of performances of the whole. * * * —The further fate of the work must then be directed as follows. Repetitions of the whole will probably next be given in the largest German cities by the company formed by myself. Particularly well-equipped theatres, such as Berlin, could arrange such performances for themselves. After that, however, all theatres will be given the option by me of giving each of the separate pieces alone as required so that * * in time probably all the four pieces will be embodied in the repertoire of the theatre as occasion offers and I shall wink an eye, that is to say overlook it. The fact that all this will naturally impart an entirely new direction and tendency to the methods of German Opera is a consequence which, far from frightening me off, fires me to go on.—

If you should be inclined [1] to associate yourselves with this great enterprise, the next question will be as to how my present position may be eased by your accession. Naturally I cannot as yet urge you to come to any specific terms, particularly in the

[1] See No. 305.

matter of an honorarium, but on the contrary must await the results of the performance before making any fixed agreement with my publisher. * * * *

304. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

MORNEX, NEAR GENEVA,
23rd June, 1856.

* * * * Just imagine—I have had three returns of erysipelas during May and early June! It has been quite impossible to think of work under such conditions, and even now I must not propose anything of the kind before the end of my cure in the middle of August. I need not tell you how this distresses me!—However, in the late summer I will make up for it by attacking *Siegfried* with renewed vigour, so that you shall get some manuscript from me again.— * * * *

305. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

MORNEX, NEAR GENEVA,
10th July, 1856.

* * Accept my best thanks for the friendly readiness you have evinced to negotiate an agreement with me in the difficult matter of an undertaking to publish my *Nibelungs*. The greatest difficulty, * * upon the definite solution of which * * you feel you must insist, consists just in the fact that the terms of the honorarium must be exactly settled forthwith if a contract of sale is to be concluded. I need scarcely tell you how exceptionally difficult my position is in this respect, as the whole case is relatively new and unprecedented. * * * *

* * * It is not possible that I should ever again conceive, far less execute, anything like my *Nibelung* works; it is the completest, ripest work of my life, and I believe that, even in the poem, I have presented the nation with a gift which will be held to have value in the future, as well as in the present. Apart from the advantages which this great work is bound to possess over my earlier ones by virtue of the far greater wealth of experience it contains, there is this to be said for its chance of success at the outset—that it will be introduced to the public for the first time by a performance * * which will at all events be exceptional.—How, then, I ask again, am I to find a standard of measurement for the honorarium for the publication of this undeniably extraordinary work, especially as the success of the first performance can decide nothing, any more than in the case of *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* * *?

If I had direct heirs and were well-to-do in proportion to my exacting requirements, I would simply propose a per cent contract with you, vested in my heirs, etc. * * * But as things are, this would be sheer self-robbery at a time when I am in the highest degree in need of support and assistance. Accordingly I think the most sensible thing would be for me to look for my standard of measurement in the needs which I have to satisfy. * * * For years it has been my earnest wish to possess a little plot of cultivated land in the country with a house upon it to satisfy my increasingly urgent need of peace and quiet—and especially of retirement from the abominable tinkle of pianos which pursues me everywhere to my increasing torment and which I have tried by every method in vain to avoid. * * * I intend to use the publishing fee for this work, for the purchase and equipment of such a plot in the neighbourhood of Zurich (which I shall never permanently leave, even in case of being amnestied), as I believe I shall only be able to finish the work in the favourable environment of such a property. * * * This sum, for all four parts, or the same number of operas (if you choose to call them so), is two thousand louis d'or or ten thousand gold thalers.— * * * *

* * * —Whatever your decision,[1] however, I feel myself compelled by the very definite needs of my situation to state that, should an agreement not be reached which would at once answer to these needs, I should be obliged to give up the completion of this great work as an impossibility. Should this be the case, I have decided to take up another work [*Tristan and Isolde*] which I could finish in the course of a year and which would furnish me, by means of honorariums from the theatres, with the necessary means for the fulfilment of my express wish. I am more than doubtful whether I should *then* ever return to the interrupted work, as I am accustomed to work upon one thing at a time, and necessarily lose the right mood for abandoned material, a fact for which there are deep psychological reasons.— * * * *

306. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

MORNEX, NEAR GENEVA,
12*th July*, 1856.

* * I have fled here at last, you see, to seek for health!—I could not but laugh when the excellent kapellmeisterin anxiously and compassionately gave warning of the arrival of the Moscheles family in Zurich! Well, I am safe from such evils!—No outsider

[1] See Nos. 309 (note 2), 315, 322.

can have the ghost of an idea of the sacrifices of people like us in intercourse with heterogeneous folk entirely strange to us, nor of the sorrows and torments induced thereby. * * * Once more—the tortures of this society have now become positively the most grievous of all to me; I plot how to isolate myself, force myself to be alone and scheme how to achieve this. When at the end of May I was actually upon the point of fleeing, Tichatschek suddenly came to see me; the good fellow with his excellent childish heart and lovably limited little brain was a real pleasure to me and his enthusiastic attachment really did me good. His voice, in particular, still delighted me much and I felt that I might make use of it yet. I wanted to drive him out to Brunnen but our project was delayed by bad weather and when at last we ventured I incurred on the journey my *twelfth* attack (for this winter) of erysipelas. I felt this would happen, and consequently was in a perpetual torment of anxiety throughout Tichatschek's twelve-day visit. This abominable disease has brought me very low; during May alone, I had three attacks and even now not an hour passes without my being in fear of a fresh outbreak. So I am not fit for anything and it is now obvious that I must take thorough means towards recovery. It is necessary for this that I should follow a meticulously strict régime as regards diet and habits of life in general, as the slightest disorder of the stomach or bowels reacts immediately upon my disease. * * *

There is a piano, too—if not of the best kind—in my *salon*; I shall, I hope, soon pluck up courage again to begin *Siegfried*. First of all, however, your scores shall be thoroughly inspected. What a packet you have sent me!! Of course I have been yearning to get some of your new works for a long time, and yet now these riches almost embarrass me and it will take time to appraise them properly. Ah! but to do that I should have to hear them, to have you to play them to me; it is all very well to read things of the kind, but the real salt, the distinctive essence which resolves all doubt, can only be enjoyed through actual hearing. * * * *

But the *Mazeppa* is frightfully beautiful! I was quite out of breath only reading it through for the first time! I am sorry for the poor steed too; nature and the world are, after all, terrible.

I would really rather write poetry now than compose; such perseverance on one thing takes an enormous amount of obstinacy. I have two more marvellous subjects which I must carry out some day—*Tristan and Isolde* (you know that!) and then—*Victory* [1]—the holiest, most perfect deliverance; but I cannot tell you about

[1] The projected opera *The Victors* was never carried out (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. xi.), but the sketch is dated 16 May, 1856.

that.—I should give it a different significance from Victor Hugo's,[1] and your music has suggested it to me—only not the conclusion—I care nothing at all for greatness, fame and national power. * * * *

307. TO THE SAME

MORNEX, NEAR GENEVA, *20th July*, 1856.

* * * * I have now got to know your *Symphonic Poems* well; they are the only music which occupies me at present, as I must not think of working during my cure. Every day I read through one score or another, just as I would read a poem, fluently and easily, and each time I feel as if I had dived down into some crystal water, alone, leaving the world behind and living my true life for an hour. Refreshed and strengthened I rise again and long for your presence. —Yes, my friend, *you can do it, you can do it!*

Well, there is not much I can say about it; the noblest expressions might well seem a little trivial. Enough—soon you will come and bring *my Dante*[2] with you. Lovely, glorious prospect! How I thank you!!—

Yesterday I sent you a parcel; it contains the original scores of *The Rhinegold* and *The Valkyrie*, which are likely to meet with a curious fate now. Listen to me—briefly!—

I shall be lost and become incapable of going on with my work if I cannot eventually find the kind of dwelling I need—that is to say, a small house all to myself. * * * For four years I have been trying in vain to realise this wish and nothing but the purchase of a plot of land and the building of a house for myself can give me what I long for. I have been brooding like a madman on how to make this possible and at last, a little while ago, it occurred to me to offer Härtel's my *Nibelungs* and get the requisite money from them. Well, they have told me that they are willing to do something unusual in order to get possession of my work, whereupon I have asked them to buy the two finished pieces at once, to expect *Siegfried* in the course of next year and *Siegfried's Death* at the end of 1858, in each instance paying me an honorarium, and to publish the whole work in 1859—the year of performance. Sheer despair has driven me to this; in this way Härtel's are to provide me with the means of purchasing a plot of land such as I want. If we agree, which must soon be decided, I shall have to deliver my two scores to them immediately. * * * *

I am beginning more and more to regret my letter to the King

[1] Liszt's *Mazeppa* is based on a poem by Victor Hugo.
[2] Liszt's *Dante Symphony* is dedicated to Wagner.

of Saxony.[1] The scandalous behaviour of the Saxon Government towards Semper [2] really leads me to expect the worst scorn and derision. * * *

Well, do *you* come, and then I will gladly leave Saxony and all Germany alone for any length of time! * * * If you put me in a really good humour, perhaps I will trot out my *Victors* for you, although the difficulty will be that whereas I have been carrying the idea of it about with me for a long time, the subject in which it is to be incorporated has only just come to me like a stroke of lightning—intensely clear and definite for *me*, but not yet in a manner suitable for communication. You must first have digested my *Tristan*, particularly the third act with the black flag and the white. After that, the *Victors* [3] would become more intelligible. * * * *

308. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, PARIS

MORNEX, *7th August*, 1856.

As to myself, I think I am fortunate to have been brought providentially under the care of Dr. Vaillant. The improvement in my health has been so great that I can now look upon the future with quite new eyes, and feel confident of being able to manage my health. I would like to see this blessing shared by everyone I love; my wife has already rejected it with scorn. * * * *

* * * Don't relax your care for me for I have still a terrible amount to do on this earth before I can go to rest. Besides *Tristan* I have yet another subject which engrosses me, so that I should like just to gulp down all the intervening work and get on to this newest plan. It is to be called *The Victors*. * * *

309. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

MORNEX, *12th August*, 1856.

* * Your esteemed letter has given me great pleasure; less, indeed, on account of the approaching success of our negotiations than because our affairs can be handled with so much sympathy on your part. * * * *

Upon one * * important point, however, I promise particularly to assist you, and that is in regard to the pianoforte arrangement without words. Formerly, in the case of *Lohengrin*, you really misunderstood me; I wished that you had shown me the arrangement

[1] See No. 299, note 2, page 300.

[2] Semper, like Wagner, could get no amnesty from the Saxon Government for his part in the May rebellion.

[3] See No. 306, note 1.

previously in order that I might be able to judge whether it could not be made more *practical*. What depressed me was that this had not been done, and that recitative phrases and the like had been included which could have neither meaning nor interest for the pianist. I, on the contrary, had conceived the notion of a kind of arrangement [1] dexterously comprising the actual melodic complex of the individual scenes and—passing over rhetorical phrases—forming a fluent musical piece out of every scene, very much in the way in which I myself should have moulded the melodic content if I had not intended it for dramatic treatment, but simply for itself—symphonically, as it were. Accordingly it cannot but interest me to tell some able pianoforte composer, of whom I know several who would be very willing to take the matter up, my intentions as indicated above, and in this way to provide you with so-called pianoforte arrangements without words which would differ most advantageously from the usual work of the kind. I undertake the task herewith and will see that you get these arrangements at the proper time.[2] * * * *

310. TO AUGUST RÖCKEL, WALDHEIM IN SAXONY

ZURICH, *23rd August*, 1856.

* * * It is seldom, probably, that any man has held concepts so widely divergent from his intuitions, has been such a stranger to himself, as I, who am forced to admit that I have only arrived at last at an understanding of my own works of art—that is to say, formed an intellectual conception of them, elucidated them to the satisfaction of my own reason—by the aid of another, who has furnished me with concepts perfectly correlative with my intuitions. The period during which I have created in response to these inner intuitions, began with *The Flying Dutchman*; *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* followed, and if there is any one imaginative principle underlying them, it is surely the high tragedy of renunciation, the deliberate, reasoned, ultimately necessary negation of the will, in which alone is salvation. It is this underlying quality which gives inspiration to my poetry and my music; without it their actual power to stir the emotions would be non-existent. Now, nothing is more striking than the fact that all the ideas I had formed by way of speculation and in an attempt to attain an understanding of life, cut clean across these basic intuitions. While, as an artist, my intuitions had such compelling certainty that all my creations were

[1] See No. 257.

[2] The firm rejected *The Ring of the Nibelungs* for publication. See also No. 315.

moulded thereby, as a philosopher, I was attempting to construct an entirely contrary explanation of the universe, an explanation which, though most stoutly upheld, was always being dismissed cavalierly by my instinctive objective artistic perceptions, much to my own astonishment. My most startling experience of this kind came to me, as it must have done, in regard to *The Nibelungs*. I shaped the poem at a time when I had built myself a conceptual universe upon the Hellenic-optimistic model, which I believed entirely possible of realisation if mankind would only will it, and in it I attempted ingeniously to bridge for myself the problem as to why, in that case, they do not actually will it. I recollect now having evolved the character of my Siegfried to this very end, with the will to present a life without sorrow; but I counted on expressing myself still more plainly through the presentation of the whole Nibelung myth, with its exposure of a first wrong, from which springs a whole world of evil, which therefore perishes, and so teaches us all a lesson on how we should recognise the evil, tear it out by the roots and establish a righteous world in its stead. And all the time I scarcely noticed that in the execution, indeed at bottom even in the planning of my design, I was unconsciously following a quite different and far deeper perception and, instead of a phase of world evolution, had discerned the nature of the universe itself in all its conceivable phases and had recognised its nothingness; whence it naturally happened that, since I was faithful not to my concepts but to my intuitions, something emerged quite different from what I had actually proposed. And yet I recollect that I at last succeeded in making my intention tell, by force as it were, in one single passage (in the significant last words of Brynhilde in which she tells the bystanders to look away from the evil thing, property, to the only satisfying thing, love), without (unfortunately!) actually quite coming to an understanding with myself as to this "love" which, after all, as we see, appears in the course of the myth as an utterly devastating force. In this one passage, then, I was blinded by the interposition of my *conscious* intentions. Well, curiously enough, this passage continually tormented me and it required the great revolution in my rational concepts, ultimately effected through Schopenhauer, to disclose to me the cause of my trouble and to give my poem a fitting keystone—a sincere recognition of the true underlying nature of things —without, on that account, rendering my work in the least propagandist. * * * *

I am an artist and nothing but an artist—that is my blessing and my curse; if it were not so, I should gladly be a saint and know my life settled in the simplest way for me; and so I run hither and

thither, poor fool, to find peace, that complex peace of an undisturbed sufficiently comfortable life, in order to—do nothing but work—be free to be an artist. This is such a difficult thing to obtain that I often have a hearty laugh at myself and my everlasting hunt for peace. * * * *

311. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING IN PARIS

[ZURICH, *end of August*, 1856.]

* * * By an extraordinary coincidence I have heard * * through a most discreet and, for the present, confidential channel, that the Grand Duke of Weimar proposes very seriously to entice me to Weimar by hook or by crook, and that—having been told of my pressing need of an undisturbed, peaceful and pleasant place to live in—he thinks of offering me such a place at the Wartburg or at one of his pleasure castles.[1] Now if the fulfilment of this one wish of mine, which I shall decidedly never see accomplished in Zurich and its neighbourhood, should finally decide me to abandon a refuge grown almost indispensably precious to me through my few but irreplaceable friends here, and to enter, perhaps, into obligations which, though not expressly stipulated, are yet certain to be imposed, it will just be a fresh proof of what trifles (looked at broadly) often determine, rule and overmaster the life of an artist of my stamp. * * * *

312. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *1st September*, 1856.

* * * * Once again I feel very much and very deeply discouraged. My chief emotion is one of utter resignation, so futile do all my efforts seem to me. True, I can honestly tell myself that I ask nothing more of the world but a place to work in and undisturbed leisure to work there; I desire neither fortune nor happiness; yet it is just this one want of mine that I ought not really to ask the world to supply, for it is not its business to assist men to rise above itself. * * *—The people best of all adapted worthily to represent the world in its dealings with the artist, have always been the princes, because they have been raised above the practical wants of life and the necessity of providing them. But if one examines all the conditions of such patronage, one finds as much that is oppressive, injurious, vain and dishonest there as elsewhere, and no one is less fitted than *I* to hazard even the most promising chance of a happy

[1] Nothing came of this. See No. 314.

exception, since I care absolutely *nothing* for the externals which are of the essence of this matter.

Now *you* wish, *entre nous*, to do all in your power to take the place of music publisher and prince? Oh God, were I in your place and could do so I would do the same, for giving is more blessed than taking, and that, indeed, lies at the very root of my art, since it is giving (in my way) that has actually exhausted all my powers. I scarcely thank you for your fine offer,[1] for I know assuredly that the sense of being able to make such an offer must be a delight that brings its own reward far beyond anything that my thanks can do. Should you be able fully to carry out your proposals on my behalf, and if *I* am ever to play a part in the history of art, you ought indeed to take no mean place therein and it would be a true heart's joy to me to assure you of it with all the vigour and determination I possess. Would it please you to lift yourself and me so high? * * * *

313. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

ZURICH, *7th September*, 1856.

* * I am sending you a young Bavarian, Count du Moulin, whose boundless enthusiasm for music and love of me brought him to Switzerland last year where he wanted my patronage, a thing which, as you know, I could not grant him as a teacher. By persistence and good behaviour he has at last got his family to allow him to follow my advice and go to Berlin to listen and to learn. Naturally I have no more in mind than just to introduce the young man to you, and I do so with the wish that you may take a fancy to him which he seems to me thoroughly to deserve. I cannot give him a direct introduction to Marx, as he wished, as that would be difficult and pointless from me, but I ask you to present him to Marx in my name, with the flattering remark, if you like, that *he* is the star which I commend to my protégé.—

For the rest I don't think I have anything special to tell you. I feel sure that what I have said is enough to ensure your good advice and guidance for my man.—Some time later, of course, you can send him on to Liszt.— * * *

314. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING IN PARIS

ZURICH, *10th September*, 1856.

You are a dear good fellow and, believe me, I feel your extraordinary interest in me very deeply. But I almost despair of its

[1] At a meeting on 18 August, Wesendonck had promised Wagner to advance him money for the purchase of a small house.

being possible to help me! My life is an ocean of contradictions from which I can only hope to emerge by death. What have you not done for me already to help and ease my lot! And yet again and again it all proves insufficient. * * * Zurich itself has become intensely wearisome and oppressive to me, owing to intimate social conditions which rule me even in my very house and to which I cannot give *my* bent, and I must confess that nothing in the place gives me any pleasure. I could turn my back on Zurich now as coldly as I once left Dresden; though I have spared no exertion, no self-sacrificing zeal here only to learn at last that here, as there once upon a time, all my sacrifices have been utterly fruitless and have not so much as procured me the satisfaction of finding the traces of my actions in any single thing. Zurich, then, is still simply a place on the map to me; but as such, or as a mere place of refuge, the only kind of social intercourse left me here has rendered it particularly distasteful to me. I feel it is time to break with this portion of my past, and I would do so—I admit it frankly—with the coldest indifference, had I not forged *one* link here unlike anything in my life before. It is the bond of gratitude and most heartfelt friendship to your household. You may believe, as I love the truth, that this is no empty compliment. The boundless forbearance and continual untiring proofs of interest which you bestow upon me must proceed from some deep source of sympathy between us (despite so many differences of character), rarely to be met with in life. Please see in this assertion my sole reason for hesitating as to what to do and what I ought to decide.

* * * Ought I not to see, after repeated experiences of the great difficulties of my position, that this burden will grow too heavy for you?—Indeed, I think it is time to make up my mind clearly and to consider how the load may be divided, at least. Only, where should I place the true centre of gravity? At Weimar or in my refuge with you?—It seems to me impossible to refuse to take advantage of the favourable dispositions [1] of the Court at Weimar to the easing and betterment of my pecuniary affairs, and this consideration is imperative for me in view of these everlasting petty worries. Yet could I enter into obligations which would permit me to enjoy my refuge with you (I no longer say Zurich) undisturbed, my dearest wish would indeed be fulfilled. * * *

The future will shortly decide me as to what I may expect. Perhaps things will turn out so that I can spend the winter in Weimar and the summer with you. * * *

[1] See Nos. 311 (note 1) and 324.

315. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

ZURICH, *22nd September*, 1856.

* * I would beg you to be so good as to return the copy of my poem *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. Apart from my own it is the last of the copies which I destined to be distributed to people whose understanding and sympathy I might hope to evoke on behalf of my work. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of indifference to me that this particular copy is in the hands of those who in self-justification must feel that it is to their own interest to see that such understanding and sympathy are not aroused, or if so are destroyed again by the verdict of some third party before my work is made public.[1] * * *

316. TO ANTON PUSINELLI, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *27th October*, 1856.

* * I could not have hoped for anything kinder on your part; give me your hand once more as my dear benefactor, and rest assured that I am deeply moved, even to tears, by your self-sacrifice and friendship! Let me say no more, and let us leave it to some happier turn in my fortunes for me to endeavour to thank you with all the energy I could wish!

Liszt wishes to give *Rienzi* at Weimar. Hitherto I have been very much opposed to it, because I think it premature and fear that the performance of this example of an earlier manner will give rise to perplexity about myself. Consideration [2] for you, however, will make me withdraw my objections and I think I may predict to you that *Rienzi* will soon be in favour everywhere. This is beginning to happen very markedly with the *Dutchman*.—

And now once more—warmest, heartiest thanks for your unshakable fidelity and friendship! Let me hear news as to how you ultimately succeed with the business. * * *

317. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

ZURICH, *1st November*, 1856.

* * * * Liszt took the greatest interest in your splendid arrangements; he read and played them all through with the utmost care, is taking them away with him to alter certain minutiæ, and is daily awaiting, as am I, the third act promised by you.

[1] A third attempt, made in 1857, to negotiate with Breitkopf and Härtel about *The Ring* was also fruitless.

[2] The proceeds of the sale of *Rienzi* were pledged to Dr. Pusinelli. See No. 300, note 2, p. 301.

* * * —I am passably well, have caroused with Liszt for three weeks (without intoxication) and hope to keep him with me some time yet.— * * *

You shall have whatever further rough sketches for *The Rhinegold* I can scrape together when I send you the first act of *Siegfried*, which shall be some time this winter, at any rate!— * * *

318. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

ZURICH, *29th November*, 1856.

* * * * Yesterday I parted finally with Liszt—who has been with me over six weeks—accompanying him as far as the Bodensee. We have got through a lot together, but our intercourse would have been yet more productive had it not been for illness on one side and the awful professorial mania of the Princess[1] on the other, which caused some emotional disturbance. Whatever the lady is, however (a *monstrum per excessum* in soul and heart anyhow), one cannot be angry with her for long; only it takes Liszt's incomparable temperament to endure all this vivacity. I, poor devil, suffered very much from it at times—I cannot support this everlasting excitement. So now I can scarcely feel anything but gladness at getting peace again and being able to think of resuming work.

Liszt's new compositions have completely captured me. The asses—and that is what most of them are—will have a job of it to dispose of this phenomenon. It is perfectly obvious to me, even where I am least in sympathy with him, and I am absolutely satisfied as to the eminent value of his creations. At St. Gall, where they got up a kind of music festival for us, he performed his *Orpheus* and the *Preludes* for me, the former of which I consider a quite unique masterpiece of the utmost perfection. And the *Preludes*, too, in which I could wish for a little more originality in the chief motives, are beautiful, bold and noble. * * * *

319. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *30th November*, 1856.

* * * I can never really belong to the world again; I like to think of myself as dead; all that I long for is undisturbed leisure for artistic work. Even Liszt's visit, which was rendered more noisy and restless this time than I could have wished owing to the Princess's presence, tired me almost as much as it unspirited me. Furthermore it was very disagreeable for me that, at the very

[1] Cf. *My Life*,, pp. 651, 652 and see No. 343.

beginning, Liszt's extraordinarily violent behaviour so offended Karl that he could not get over his displeasure—in spite of Liszt's propitiatory advances—and avoided our circle the whole time. This grieved me very deeply.[1] * * * I confess to you frankly that Karl is becoming an increasingly important factor with me and my acquaintance—a real benefit, indeed—which it is very painful for me to forgo. I hope you will soon hear that our friendly relations are unbroken. I have conceived the warmest and most intimate personal interest in the young married couple and Karl's strangenesses and freaks have a good spontaneous apologist in me when anyone is offended by them, so that I am glad to know that Frau Wesendonck likes him and befriends him and I find it an added reason for thinking well of her.— * * * *

I have a particular request to make to Emilie. Liszt has given me news of Jessie [Laussot] which has very greatly excited my interest. She is setting about carving out an independent and separate life for herself by establishing a school, and she has appealed for Liszt's help to this end. Now I want Emilie to give me a detailed account of Jessie's recent past and the amazing change which seems to have come about in her life. If it really should prove that Jessie has developed strength enough to extricate herself from unworthy dependence (as touching her husband), no one would owe her warmer sympathy than myself; indeed, I might say I was put to shame by her. Altogether I am still not quite clear about the meaning of her unfortunate letter to Karl (in June 1850) which could not but place a great gulf between us.[2] It would be very comforting to me to be able still to extend the hand of friendship to Jessie, now, when passion can no longer cloud our relationship. You will no doubt recognise in this request to my kind Emilie nothing but the sincere purpose of a man who needs peace and desires reconciliation, and who could like to be able to cull an enduring friendship from the passing tempest of passion!— * * *

320. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING IN PARIS

ZURICH, 30*th November*, 1856.

I promised * * to write to you as soon as I had something really good to tell you. Well, Liszt thinks that our St. Gall venture was a real success. * * * *

* * * I will tell you how well the concert turned out. Liszt's

[1] The difference arose through a remark about Napoleon III. See No. 322; Wagner's circumstantial letter to Frau Ritter, 7 December, 1856, and *My Life*, pp. 649, 650, 653; also No. 324.

[2] See No. 178.

Orpheus interested me deeply; it is one of the most beautiful, most perfect, indeed the most incomparable of tone-poems. My enjoyment of this work was great! The public liked the *Preludes* better, and they were encored—Liszt was made very happy by my unfeigned appreciation of his works and expressed his joy thereat very movingly. I did not much enjoy the *Eroica*. My personal pleasure was submerged in the inexpressible efforts I had to make to spur the already exhausted orchestra to the required heights. Altogether, I no longer care much for Beethoven symphonies; I know them so well I have pretty well exhausted the interest of them. * * * *

I may say as the result of Liszt's visit this time that my friendship for him is not diminished but materially strengthened. * * *

For the rest, my association with the two ladies[1] and with the Princess in particular has after all affected me very favourably; the Princess's great kindness of heart has made me more equable and led me to govern my very excitable temper better. * * * *

321. TO FRANZ LISZT, STAYING AT MUNICH

ZURICH, *6th December*, 1856.

* * * * Well, you may believe me or you may not, but the one wish I am conscious of now is to get to see you soon! * * * I lack music too—and God knows, only you can give it me! I feel what a wretched performer I am, whereas I believe I have discovered that you are the greatest pianist of all time. That will be news indeed to you!

Farewell! Tell Marie I have been at the old red pocket-book[2] again and have got my biography into shape down to December 1st, 1856.—

322. TO THE SAME, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *16th December*, 1856.

* * * * Your last visit, despite the discordancies to which our intercourse was subject, has left one decided impression on me and it is this: Your friendship is the greatest and most significant event in my life. If I can enjoy your society oftener, quietly and undistractedly in my own way, it is all I can wish for. * * * —Accordingly my one desire is to be able to visit you at need and stay with you periodically.

[1] Princess Caroline of Sayn-Wittgenstein and her daughter Marie (mentioned in the next letter), called "the child."

[2] This "red pocket-book" was used by Wagner for autobiographical notes from 1835. Cf. *My Life*, p. 133.

FRANZ LISZT

From a drawing by Kriehuber, 1856. *In the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig*

Well—seriously—how about it? This letter will be waiting for you in Weimar. What kind of news have you to give me of the Grand Duke?[1] * * *

As to Weimar, listen to what I propose. I would like to come to Altenburg, not to Weimar, and if it were practicable I should be content to live there quite incognito. As this would not be possible, my presence might be known to the Court alone. If the Court want anything of me I am ready to read my poems there in person, perhaps—with you—to perform, according to *our* ideas, by playing fragments of my music (as for instance Act I. of *The Valkyrie*). But I will do nothing at all in public.— * * *

As regards my subsistence and my last fond hopes of a pension from Weimar—or from some combination—you have given me a momentous hint which I have not let pass unnoticed and the bearings of which I have considered. My conclusion is that I would prefer to remain unsubsidised from that quarter.[2] * * * Nevertheless my livelihood is now threatened from a somewhat unexpected quarter. Karl Ritter's absurd behaviour towards you and his (consequent) impudence to me have deeply embroiled me with the Ritter family, since Frau Ritter [3] took her son's part and blamed me. It is true that the mother has recently taken back these reproaches and asks me to forget what has passed, yet I feel clearly by this time that an important change has taken place in my position as regards this family, Karl having insulted me most deeply —I have very definitely broken with him—so that I can no longer accept the support which came to me from them.— * * * *

I do not deny that I should be glad if you could succeed in bringing about a speedy agreement with Härtel's on the subject of *The Nibelungs* [4] * *. If this too fails, it would certainly be expedient to interest the Court of Weimar in the work in question, at least to the point of according me certain advantages for a time * *.

If you should find the cost of achieving this too high, there would be nothing for it but for me to give up *The Nibelungs* and take up a simple work, such as *Tristan*, instead; which would have the advantage that it could probably be disposed of easily to the theatres, thereby bringing in royalties for me, even though—as you know—I should get nothing for it from the music dealers.— * * * *

Since my return from St. Gall I have not seen a soul except Herwegh. Lonely walks, a certain amount of work and reading,

[1] See Nos. 314, 324.

[2] The Grand Duke of Weimar could not agree on a permanent pension, even in conjunction with other princes. See No. 324.

[3] See No. 319, note 1.

[4] See No. 315, note 1.

constitute my whole existence * *—. The letters between Goethe and Schiller have very much edified me, though; they suggested our own relationship very closely and showed me what rich fruits might spring, under happier circumstances, from our working together.

In your letters from Munich I saw you in an increasingly happy artistic environment—a thing which I gloated over very heartily. I regret your *rencontre* with Schmitt; all I told you of the fellow was that I was extremely well satisfied at one time with his voice and his manner, but that I could not judge in the least as to his methods. As you could not hear him sing, though, and none of his pupils was far enough advanced to be able to sing you anything worth hearing, I can well understand that the poor fellow must have bored you terribly with his theory. * * * *

323. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING IN PARIS

ZURICH, *22nd December*, 1856.

* * * * I can no longer adapt my mood to *Siegfried*; my musical sentiments have already far outrun it to a place which suits my mood—the realm of sadness. Truly it all seems to me—as stale and superficial as can be.

You can have no conception of our loneliness now, and as to my health, I feel heavy as lead. * * *

324. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *24th December*, 1856.

* * This recent occurrence has tried me very much and it concerns me more deeply than even you appear to suppose. I have mastered myself to the point of not retaliating upon Karl in any way, and am glad now to have become sufficiently quiet and collected to be able to adduce what I still feel it necessary to tell you for my own justification without doing violence to your feelings as a mother.

I would pass over what has happened recently in total silence, as you wished me to do, if there were not a mistake to be put right. You take it for granted that there must have been a long-nourished animosity between Karl and myself which was only waiting the kindling spark to become a conflagration. Forthwith I assure you that on the contrary, as far as I was concerned, a steady, or even a growing, feeling of kindness has been the leading feature of my attitude to Karl since he recently became my neighbour. I am simply conscious of having exercised such patience and forbearance towards his whims, peculiarities and really offensive discourtesies as I have never done before—not at least to a man. * * * *

But for me, my esteemed friend, the decision involved in my future attitude to Karl has a further consequence! Do you think it possible that I could continue to accept the too great sacrifice which you and your dear family have been making for me in this annual, very considerable, pecuniary subsidy? That you make a real sacrifice on my behalf in the fullest sense of the word I know and am able to judge—or perhaps it is greater than I am able to judge. You and yours made this sacrifice for me in order to ensure for me the independence and leisure for further artistic activities, indispensably necessary to my situation as an artist. The true and only basis of my independence has been and is this income and nothing else; anything else that came my way was only of use in adding in little ways to the amenities of my independence and giving a semblance of comfort to my radically baseless standing in the social order. But it was always this yearly allowance and this alone which secured me, whatever might befall, and made it possible for me not to allow my free artistic spirit to be forced to make concessions in any quarter. I tell you frankly that at this moment I have not the slightest prospect of replacing this extraordinarily valuable subsidy in any way whatever; and yet —I see that from henceforth I must renounce it. Please understand plainly that I could only accept such a sacrifice as long as I could be sure that its source was perfect sympathy, a sympathy so strong that it indulgently embraced my very faults and weaknesses. I have no reason to doubt your incomparable friendship for me, but it is impossible that my now lasting breach with your son should not so cloud our relations as to make me feel a—silent—reproach at each receipt of the money for my support. I must confess to you that Karl has already frequently made me feel my dependence in painful fashion, and filled me with a troubled foreboding that I—might become a burden. Indeed, I go so far as to believe that much of Karl's behaviour to me may be explained simply by his knowledge of my dependent position. There may have been things in my manner of life which, in view of this knowledge, may have frequently betrayed him into the bitterness which I have repeatedly been made to feel in him, despite the fact that he would now and then be seized with a generous mood which was quite enough to lead me astray. * * *

* * * Even before this occurrence I had been recently thinking how I could possibly find a substitute for the support you accorded me, so that, thus equipped, I could come to you with a light heart and gratefully restore from henceforward the use of the yearly allowance to your esteemed family. Indeed this was my urgent

duty in view of your pecuniary circumstances. Accordingly I was already thinking whether it might not be possible to get the Grand Duke of Weimar to allow me a sum equal to the amount of your subvention in the form of a pension, but Liszt informs me that this could only be realised if I were to be amnestied and able to visit Weimar. Of this, however, I have still no real prospect; all the same, it remains a hope and I would ask you to consider it as a prospect. In this way only can you relieve my overburdened feelings, and you may be sure of one thing, if you now take back the allowance you have made me, I for my part surrender it with a feeling of gratitude to you [1] which knows no bounds!—

When I look back on my past life I see here and there a flashing, quivering, dissolving light, but once only did I meet with enduring life-giving warmth such as shone upon me from your friendship. Never before had I experienced anything in the remotest degree resembling it * *; it is you alone who have saved my life and my art. Judge then whether I can ever cease to honour you in my inmost heart as the guardian angel of my life.— * * *

325. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH], *6th January*, 1857.

* * * * Since you left me an important change has occurred in my situation. I have definitely given up my income from the Ritters. All I shall accept further is the half-year's instalment due on the past New Year's Day—which I shall hand over to Karl Ritter who last year in Dresden paid an old creditor [2] 400 thalers on my behalf—a sum which I had hoped to repay him in the course of *this* year from business takings, but which, now that I have broken completely with the impudent young fellow, I must of course give back to him at once. Consequently I am deprived at a stroke of 1500 francs of revenue which I had counted on as certain and destined to cover my New Year's bills. These bills are more pressing than ever this time, as people are expecting the sudden departure of the refugees from Zurich in case of war. Wesendonck, whose support I am already engrossing in another connection, will probably not be back from Paris at all soon; besides, I *cannot* let him undertake the burden of everything.—Under these circumstances my only hope is that the interrupted business negotiations [3] with Härtel's about *The Nibelungs* in which, in accordance with your friendly offer, I gave you plenary powers, may yet have a successful

[1] Frau Ritter insisted on continuing her support. See Nos. 325 and 333.
[2] Hiebendahl, the oboist. See No. 333.
[3] See No. 315, note 1.

issue. But now you are tied to your bed again and will not in any case be able to visit Leipzig as soon as would be needful to settle the business. * * * If you believe that success is certain, the question is how I could at once obtain an advance payment of 1500 francs on the transaction. * * * Moreover, my future amnesty will only be granted when Saxony thinks the right moment has come; the gentlemen there want to show their independence.— * * *

326. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, HANOVER

ZURICH, *25th January*, 1857.

* * All that I hear about you induces me to believe that in you I have found the singer I have sought in fear and trembling for my "Siegfried." As soon as you get to know this work (on which I am still engaged) you will easily be able to judge how critically important this question is to me. As far as I am concerned the whole should be ready for performance—if I am not interrupted by serious illness—by the summer of 1859. * * * My chief anxiety is as to whether I shall be fortunate enough to find the kind of performers I want. You are the first I have in view, which is the reason for my approaching you so soon. And yet you are causing me anxiety already, as I hear that you are one of those unusual people who sacrifice themselves to their zeal. Therefore take it kindly when I earnestly beseech you to bear in mind the extraordinary undertaking for which I solicit you and do not squander your powers. Take care of yourself and always remember that you have a great and noble artistic effort in front of you which, I promise you, will be worth present consideration.— * * * *

327. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH], *27th January*, 1857.

* * * * —Well, I too have been so low in health again recently that, since I finished the rough draft for the first act of *Siegfried* ten days ago, I have literally been unable to write down another note without being chased away from work by the most agonising headaches. So every morning I sit down, stare at the paper, and am lucky in the end if I can manage Walter Scott. It is simply that I have overexerted myself again; but how am I to recover my strength?? I got on well with *The Rhinegold*, but I had great trouble even with *The Valkyrie* and now I am like a pianoforte badly out of tune (as regards my nervous system)—and I have got to hammer out *Siegfried* upon it. A pretty state of things! This last, I imagine, will break the strings ultimately and then all will be over. Well, *we* cannot alter matters—but really it is a dog's life!— * * * *

328. TO OTTO WESENDONCK, STAYING IN PARIS

[ZURICH, 31*st January*, 1857.]

Steel of my sire my hand may tame;
Myself will weld the Sword!—[1]

I had got so far and was just meditating the motif that is to express the sudden turn of events and the beginning of Siegfried's wondrous smithy work when your letter broke in on me with its confidential news [2] and you may judge how it stands with my work for the day! But I can well sacrifice "to-day," now that I see before me such long beautiful propitious workday to-morrows, for which I have to thank the rarest friendship and the truest sympathy!

* * * Dearest fellow, I have never known anything like it!—such a thorough-going helpful power of friendship has never yet [3] entered my life. And what I have just been feeling was not actually joy in the acquirement of property, but rather the glorious glow the sense of your friendship gave, the consciousness of being cared for, that suddenly lifted every weight and burden from me. Oh you good dear people! *What* am I to say to you? Everything about me is suddenly transformed as if by a word of magic! * * * You shall not be disappointed in me for this. * * * *

329. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH], 8*th February*, 1857.

* * * * Wesendonck has actually bought the little property in question and offers to let me a perpetual lease of it.

He had to pay a very high price for it and now would like to make certain that no proceedings on the part of my Dresden creditors (who—it appears—do not feel that they are very securely covered by the cession of my publishing rights) can threaten me, and consequently him. Other considerations, based partly on the character of my friend and partly upon certain other very delicate relations, have brought me to decide definitely not to enter into this property if I cannot at the same time render myself entirely independent of Wesendonck in a pecuniary sense and give him absolutely binding guarantees to that effect. * * * *

* * * I have completed the composition of my first act [of *Siegfried*] and am thinking of orchestrating it as soon as I have recovered a little while remaining in my present quarters. But I can no longer think of resuming *composition* here; I have suffered

[1] Des Vaters Stahl fügt sich wohl mir:
Ich selbst schmeisse das Schwert.—

[2] The purchase of the "Asyl" for Wagner. [3] But see No. 324.

too much in this house recently from disturbances—musical and unmusical. * * * *

330. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

ZURICH, *9th February*, 1857.

* * * * The nearer the time comes when I shall have to think of preparations for the possibility of my *Nibelungs* being performed, the more solicitous I am becoming about the casting of the principal female rôle—the Brynhilde. I still cannot persuade myself that I shall ever find anyone more suitable for the part than she for whom I originally intended it, that is to say, my niece Johanna.

Unfortunately, as you know, thoroughly hostile relations [1] have grown up between myself and her father. Though I can otherwise do justice to his good qualities, he has something about him provocative of ill-will in me which, all the more for our close blood relationship, led to my breaking with him altogether. Nevertheless the question for me is whether I need yet quite abandon the idea of Johanna for my purpose, and accordingly I ask you as a really skilled diplomatist to help me to attain my end. As you are friendly with her and her family you would start with a great advantage. I count especially on Johanna's marriage, as that will in some sort do away with her father's interference between us.

If her future husband [2] is a sensible man and has even tolerable generosity of disposition, he is bound to be glad that his wife [3] should close her theatrical career, by co-operation in this production, in a remarkable and unprecedented fashion. If you can get on terms with her and with him, tell them of my wishes and indicate tentatively the summer of 1859 as the time and Weimar as (very probably) the place. Represent to them the extraordinary nature of the affair. * * * *

I think I shall have to stick to Niemann of Hanover for the "Siegfried"; I should be very glad if you could see and hear him some time. I have got Tichatschek for Siegmund and—if necessary —for Loge. There is still no prospect of a Wotan.—

The first act of *Siegfried* has just been finished. I am continually very unwell. Still, it will be quite finished in the summer. * * *

331. TO PRINCESS MARIE WITTGENSTEIN, WEIMAR [4]

[ZURICH, *4th March*, 1857.]

* * * * Really, if I have to do without Liszt for long, I shall pine away. I simply cannot tell you how I long to hear all his works well

[1] See No. 229. [2] Landrat (a kind of district commissioner) Jachmann.
[3] She let Wagner know of her willingness through Bülow. See No. 333.
[4] *An Freunde*, p. 199, falsely dated January. Our date is based on note 1, p. 326.

performed by a good orchestra. Bad as things were with me at St. Gall, the impression the concert there left upon me is unforgettable. I want to hear *everything* now, especially *Hamlet* and *Dante*; but I haven't even got the scores of them!! I have just read in a notice of St. Gall in Brendel's *Journal* [1] that I expressed "great recognition" of Liszt's compositions!! That enraged me so that I almost wrote to Brendel to protest. I feel such a fool with my "recognition"! As if I could have anything to "recognise" when I was so utterly carried away by admiration, so touched to the soul, that I could do nothing but revel in this rare, high bliss. But, Heavens above! I shall never bring myself again to write in a newspaper.[2] I should not know where to begin or where to leave off! And after all, to *whom* would I say all this? You know my melancholy opinion about the musical journals' public—my repulsion is unconquerable!— * * *

Since our parting I have been greedily devouring the Goethe-Schiller correspondence. It is my way rarely to read the actual words before me, as it were, but to read something into them. Well, I just read here of all the things that Liszt and I could promote, instigate and propagate if we were nearer to each other! And I read also about our rare friendship, too, in letters of gold. * * * So the book became for me a real commemorative feast of our companionship.—Since then I can read no more. For when I am tired in the evenings and want to be soothed before going to sleep, I have taken up—Walter Scott again. Mostly I avoid exciting reading because I am always involuntarily brought back by it to my future subject-matter and am afraid of being disturbed thereby in my present work. All the same I have read Schack's *Voices from the Ganges*,[3] quite newly published. You must read them too, even though the lyrics do not belong to the noblest period of Indian poetry. * * *

Siegfried is getting on through sheer compulsion. The scene with the "Wanderer" is a huge success and now I am busy forging the sword. To-day—in the midst of my sufferings—Mime cried, "I am as old as the cavern and the forest, but never have I seen a sight like this!" and this made me laugh aloud, so that my wife came in amaze to the sofa where she knew I was lying with my head all confused. So it is indeed. A sudden burst of laughter like that and then a long spell of pain!—

[1] *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 27 February, 1857: "A storm of *encores* [after *Orpheus*], in which Richard Wagner in particular joined very warmly, procured us the pleasure of a repetition."

[2] Wagner, however, did so often, though not after this till 1859 ("In Memory of L. Spohr and W. Fischer").

[3] *Stimmen vom Ganges.*

* * * In *The Victors* something like this will happen. The maiden (Savitri presumably) who, while she waits in Act II. for the coming of Ananda, flings herself in transport among the flowers, for very fullness of joy absorbing sun, woodland, bird-song, water, all nature into herself, is challenged by Çakya, after she has made the fateful vow, to look around her and above and has then to tell what she thinks of it all. "It is no longer fair," she says, gravely, sadly, for now she sees the other aspect of the world. In the second act of *Tristan*—but you know nothing about that yet. That is only music as yet.— * * * *

332. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, HANOVER

ZURICH, *1st April*, 1857.

Accept my best thanks * * for your friendly letter. Your warm assurances have strengthened the hopes I reposed in you and I think I may believe that we belong to each other.

Would it not be possible for you to repeat the visit, which I so unfortunately missed, this summer? * * *

I cannot very well tell you anything *at present* about the composition, but you must get to know the whole poem. Bülow, through whom you receive these lines, will, I hope, send you at the same time a copy of the poem. Unfortunately I have only my own copy left now as I was too generous from the first with my, intentionally, very small supply of copies. But this will suffice to acquaint you with my intentions. As regards the future performance I can naturally only speak very indefinitely as yet. In any case, however, I would ask you to say nothing further about it. It distressed me to see my overtures to you discussed in the papers even before I got your answer—inaccurately, moreover, as is always the case. These journalists, after all, are a troublesome, obtrusive and indiscreet race against whom one must be on guard. Only I may tell you this much, that I am not thinking of Zurich as the place of production, because everything would be so costly here. I hope before that to be able to go to Germany again and—very probably—the Grand Duke of Weimar will seize the opportunity of complying with my wishes in a very special manner, so that the production will take place in a specially constructed temporary theatre. * * * *

333. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *6th May*, 1857.

* * My first letter from my new dwelling is for you, from whom came the first letter I received here. That first letter, coming to me

in my latest place of retreat, was so remarkable an omen for me that it filled me with inexpressibly blessed emotion. Let me tell you a little about it!—

The sorrow with which I have thought of you all this time, the deep heartfelt grief which has rankled in me, must remain my secret. I could only keep on asking myself how it might be possible to get to see you. The fact that we saw each other seven years ago,[1] for a very short time only and under freedom-fettering conditions, and that we have never been able to come face to face with each other again since then—that is what I have to deplore as my worst misfortune in regard to you. Believe me, it was a deep-seated need which made me try so often to persuade you to choose Switzerland for your dwelling-place, or at least to visit it more frequently. I felt that this was necessary to secure our friendship on a real personal basis. It is *you*, after all, who are really nearest to me of all your family; for only your age and the freedom of character you have attained, can make it possible for you to cherish that limitless indulgence towards the angularities of my nature which such as I need so much if we are to succeed in maintaining the great patience and endurance necessary in our contacts with a world radically hostile, foreign and injurious to us. The great and wide sympathy with my position upon which this attitude depends is no doubt the basis of your love for me; it is only so that your great, self-sacrificing loyalty and affection can be explained. Through it you would surely find the further strength to overlook, in personal intercourse with me, the many roughnesses of my outward manner and to cling steadily to that by which, even in personal intercourse, I am able to compensate for all my asperities. And *you* of all people—that is what I want to say—you could understand me more clearly than younger people could, who are themselves still too deeply involved in egotistic desires, and in striving to carve their own way, to make the solacing and salvation-bringing adjustments necessary to me. Consequently it was always a grief to me to be obliged to remain so far away from you—perhaps even to be a stranger to you personally—and all the more so as our most obvious link was essentially unfitted to take your place in this respect. And so—forgive my touching upon it once more!—my first thought on reading through your last letter last year was, "Oh, if only you could be near her for a while!"—

Let me tell you, in few words, what a number of anxious or longing thoughts have troubled me all through this winter, when my mind was on you!

[1] In Villeneuve, Thun, after the Laussot catastrophe. See Nos. 177, 178.

My health, which you inquire about so sympathetically, always fails me of course when it is most important for me to set my mind free. It is true that I have to thank my excellent doctor, Dr. Vaillant, who treated me last summer at Mornex, for freedom from the horrible erysipelas and the right injunctions as to how to keep well, but I was rash enough, while following his otherwise very profitable prescriptions, to work, uninterruptedly and particularly hard, with the result that I finally brought upon myself great weakness and prostration. * * *

* * * In Dresden everything seems to remain barred and bolted against me and the good Grand Duke of Weimar will not stir me to illusory hopes so easily a second time. In every quarter, and in this last opening also, there is nothing for me beyond words—fair words; and as you are quite determined not to be rid of me, I may tell you that in this regard your persistence is a very good thing for me. If you persist for a while—or until my circumstances change in this respect—in lending me your support, I may tell you in return that it is my sole *secure* source of income and is a *great* consolation to me at this particular moment since, for reasons deeply rooted in our relationship, I could never reconcile it with my sense of honour, after the great and friendly service from Wesendonck,[1] ever again to lay claim to my neighbour's help for my livelihood. * * *

If you would like to hear another piece of good news from me, let me tell you that though I have only completed the first act of *Siegfried* this winter (when I was much hindered, first by Liszt's visit and afterwards by great nervous prostration), I have succeeded with it beyond all expectations. It was quite new ground for me, and after the terrible tragedy of *The Valkyrie* I entered upon it with a sense of fresh delight such as I have never felt before. The first act having taken shape I am now convinced that *Young Siegfried* is likely to become very speedily and fortunately my most popular work, bringing all the other pieces in its train, so that *he* will very probably be the founder of my whole *Nibelungs* dynasty. The first performance of the whole work, however, will probably not be before 1860. * * * *

For the rest, my work will no longer be disturbed. In the first place I shall not leave my beautiful *refuge* this summer until *Siegfried* is quite finished. Then may Heaven bless next year for the last piece! Once that is finished—ah well, I have so many more subjects in my head that I would rather not have to think of the production even then!— * * * *

[1] See No. 329.

334. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *8th May*, 1857.

* * * Ten days ago we moved into the little country house near the Wesendoncks' villa, for which I have to thank the really immense interest of this friendly family. * * * As you will see, I have got a charming spot in which to live secluded, and when I recollect how long I have been yearning for something of the kind and how difficult it was even to see it as a possibility, I cannot but feel that this good fellow Wesendonck is one of my greatest benefactors. By the way, three weeks ago his wife was delivered of a son, whose voice, they say, has good high notes and whom I have tentatively named "the *Youngest* Siegfried." The Wesendoncks hope to be able to move out to their estate early in July; their neighbourhood is full of friendly and pleasant promise for me. Well, that is one thing accomplished. I hope very shortly to be able to take up my long-interrupted work again and in any case I shall not leave my charming refuge (be it for any excursion whatever) till Siegfried has come to a full understanding with Brynhilde. So far I have only finished Act I., but that is complete to the last jot and tittle, a great success and more beautiful than all the rest. I was myself astonished that I could have achieved it, for since we were last together I have once more seemed to myself a horribly bungling musician. * * * *

* * * Only don't let the Grand Duke imagine that I am writing my *Nibelungs* for him, and that some day he can deck himself with the plumage, while in the meantime he thanklessly leaves the bird that grew it, to languish. I shall find other ways than through this lukewarm prince, to whom for years now I have been sufficiently grateful for—*nothing*! Well, this by way of parenthesis! And yet, joking apart, the Emperor of Brazil [1] has now had me invited to go to him at Rio de Janeiro; I am to be given everything in abundance there. Well then—if not in Weimar, in Rio!!— * * *

335. TO KARL KLINDWORTH, LONDON

ZURICH, *18th May*, 1857.

* * * * As regards your references to Praeger,[2] I have only one thing to say. You over-estimate the importance of my connection

[1] See No. 338. Cf. *My Life*, pp. 662, 663. This invitation was a hoax.

[2] *My Life* also makes it clear that Wagner's acquaintance with Ferdinand Praeger was only superficial. The latter, however, made out that it was most intimate. His very debatable book *Wagner as I knew Him* was translated into German and published at Leipzig but withdrawn from circulation by Breitkopf and Härtel. Cf. also *Richard Wagners Echte Briefe an Ferdinand Praeger: Kritik der Praegerschen Veröffentlichung* (Wagner's Genuine Letters to Ferdinand Praeger: A Criticism of Praeger's Publication), by H. S. Chamberlain (Bayreuth, 1894; 2nd ed., Berlin, 1908).

with him. It must surely have been clear to you that I had only very superficial intercourse with him; if he made more of it, it was because I, with my passionate and intent nature, was thinking, in an acquaintanceship of that kind, more of satisfying my need to be nonchalant, to let myself go, than of anything else. I want to be at my ease and on these occasions am easily won by complaisance and adaptability; and I like to have someone beside me then with whom I can play the fool a little, because that does me good. Dearest friend, this you see was the substance of my association with Praeger, and judge whether it is not a sheer impossibility for me ever to be in a position to be betrayed by Praeger! As to himself, I have never had occasion to give him a moment's solid thought. * * * And now do not be afraid on my account. Praeger cannot possibly abuse my "confidence"; he really is not on that footing with me.— * * *

336. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

ZURICH, ASYL,[1] *21st May*, 1857.

The Muse is beginning to visit me. * * * The first thing that came to me was a melody, which at first I didn't in the least know how to place, until all at once the words for it came to me from the lastscene of *Siegfried*. A good omen! Yesterday, too, the opening of the second act dawned upon me—as "Fafner's Rest," which gave me a humorously cosy motif. * * * *

337. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

[ZURICH, *end of May*, 1857.]

* * * * I feel stranger and stranger as I look out upon the world. While still living in the body to be thus isolated in empty space, as it were, produces, after a time, a unique frame of mind, a mingling of disdain and longing. Through letters and so forth, I see you all as an abandoned sort of show and I hear not a sound from it; I am like one deaf all the time. The sense of dreaming grows on me more and more, only sometimes it seems to me as if all you were dreaming a mad tumultuous confused dream and I were the one soul awake and able to laugh at you. I am curious to see how long this will go on and what will be the final upshot. Very often I hardly know whether I am alive and it is possible that I shall be pulling my own nose next to make sure. My plan of work has now reached a critical stage, quite unexpected, perhaps—by you. The desire to continue and to finish my *Nibelungs* is, to-day, nil; no one offers

[1] "Refuge"—Wagner's "little estate."

me the necessary cash inducements! Still—it is better I should keep all this to myself!—

As to Liszt, my only feeling about him at present is *anxiety* over the decline of his health, and *anger, rage* and *hate* against everything which tends to drag him down to his ruin. Or am I to remain indifferent, when anyone can see with half an eye that Liszt is on the way to a very early dissolution, unless he withdraws absolutely from *every* kind of excitement and undergoes a thorough and lengthy cure? I have confided my painful anxiety, my urgent admonitions to the unhappy Princess and, finally, to Liszt himself —since when not a word from Weimar.—

The devil take you all with your swine-music-festivals and musical-horse-races; you let yourselves be pelted with flowers in one quarter and with filth in another! What is the use of it all, when there is not the least possibility of getting good performances? No goodness, but much dirt! * * * *

338. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *28th June*, 1857.

* * * * Besides, the Wesendoncks are still in the thick of *not* being able to move in; things are not going at all smoothly for them. At various times I have sufficiently explained to you that my connection with the pair is fairly strictly a matter of my art and not merely a matter of social enjoyment. I find him quite bearable while I keep very independent of the business man in him and I have made stern resolutions as to this for the future. Seeing what an extraordinarily lonely life I lead here (for Semper, Herwegh and the rest are all immersed in their own troubles and grievances), I suppose I must be glad of this or any other burden, which at least makes me aware that I am alive. * * *

I shall not trouble about Härtel's any further as I have at last decided to abandon my obstinate attempt to complete my *Nibelungs*. I have brought my *Young Siegfried* into the lovely solitudes of the forest; there I have left him under the lime-tree and have bidden him farewell with heartfelt tears; he is better there than elsewhere. —If I am ever to take up the work again, it must either be made very easy for me or I must be enabled personally to *give* my work to the world in the fullest sense of the term. * * *

* * * —I think of doing a shorter version of *Tristan and Isolde* at once to make performance easy and to produce it this time next year with Niemann and Mme. Meyer, in Strasburg. The theatre there is fine, a neighbouring German Court theatre (Karlsruhe

perhaps) can supply me with the orchestra and the rest of the (unimportant) personnel, so I think that with the help of God, and in my own way (without the Grand Duke of Weimar), I may produce something again which will help to enliven me and restore my self-assurance. But from another point of view this enterprise offers me the only possible chance of maintaining my position. * * * For I hope I may be justified in supposing that a thoroughly practicable work—such as *Tristan* is to be—will speedily yield good revenues [1] and keep me afloat for a while. But in addition I have another curious project; that is to say I am thinking of having this work well translated into Italian and offering it for first performance as an Italian opera in the theatre at Rio de Janeiro * *. I shall dedicate it to the Emperor of Brazil who will shortly be receiving copies of my last three operas,[2] and all this should, I think, yield enough to keep me unmolested for a time. Whether after that I shall be able to take up my *Nibelungs* again I cannot, indeed, foresee. * * *

Your last three "symphonic poems" have once again given me —painful pleasure. In reading them through I was constantly reminded of my wretched situation, which renders all such things mute to me—to me of all people who can do so little for myself. God knows, my very greatest delight, such as your *Mountain Symphony*, is turned to sorrow thereby!—But I have bewailed all this a thousand times already—there is no help for it—and because of it may the devil fly away with your Grand Duke and the rest, by no means forgetting Councillor of State, Müller; the wretched fellow has sent me another bundle of nonsense and rubbish about my *Nibelungs* and probably expects an appreciative answer from me in return.[3] Such freaks always come my way, when what I am looking for is *men*! *They* are the type who persist in taking an interest in me with astonishing loyalty and devotion.—My God, it is all very well for you to talk! * * * *

As to my address, the very blind of "Zurich" know my step.— As to *Tristan—silence most absolute!!!*

339. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *9th July*, 1857.

* * * * I have just had a quite surprisingly amiable and friendly letter from the Grand Duke of Baden, which I really value as the

[1] As is known, Wagner was mistaken in this. See also No. 344. *Tristan and Isolde* was not produced till 1865 in Munich and then became generally known very slowly.

[2] See No. 334. "I have never since heard anything either of these pianoforte arrangements, or of the Emperor of Brazil * *" (*My Life*, p. 663).

[3] A newspaper article. Franz Müller's book *The Ring of the Nibelungs* was not published till 1862.

first sign of the breaking through of all kinds of meticulous or artificial Court etiquette hitherto observed in my case. The occasion was a little attention [1] I showed to the young Grand Duchess for which he now thanks me in his name and hers with genuine feeling and very touchingly.

Last week Edward Devrient was with me for three days and consecrated my little guest chamber. I told him also about my *Tristan* project. He highly approved it; only he was against Strasburg—prudent and cautious as he is accustomed to be. He undertook to negotiate for a first performance in Karlsruhe under my conductorship. The Grand Duke seems to have got wind of something of the kind already—probably through Devrient—for in one passage in his letter he plainly alludes to his expectation of seeing me soon in Karlsruhe.

Well, as God wills!—But I see this much—that I shall have to perform another little miracle soon now, to make people believe in me.— * * *

340. TO THE SAME

[ZURICH, *29th September*, 1857.]

And so you did not come, dearest Franz! Without a word of explanation to me—simply, silently, did not come! * * * *

Hans and Cosima have grown very dear to me. I am very melancholy at seeing them leave me to-day.[2] * * *

They are taking with them a transcript of *Tristan* which I have been writing while he was here. * * *

341. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

ZURICH, *30th September*, 1857.

* * * * Certain quite special considerations have caused me to decide to break off my work upon the *Nibelungs* for a while in order at once to carry out a subject which I conceived some years previously. A principal consideration was my wish to take in hand a work which, being far less exacting in performance, would afford me the possibility of actually producing it immediately upon completion. Having two prospects of being able to do this open to me abroad, I eventually decided to interrupt my greater work and am now on the point of beginning the musical composition of my previously completed poem of *Tristan and Isolde*, for such is to be the name of my new work. One thing which recommended this

[1] A leaf for an album, *Wotan's Farewell*. Cf. *My Life*, p. 661.
[2] See No. 342.

subject to me was the fact that it required only a very modest setting. * * * Moreover the original character of the theme attracts me, as opening a region for musical treatment wherein I have long desired to spread myself at large and luxuriantly; you will perhaps guess the kind of thing I mean when I tell you that I shall have no misgivings in having my poem translated into *the Italian.* * * *

This brings me to another reason I have for writing to you. I wish to ask if you will be so kind as to advise me what preliminary steps I should take to secure copyright in the shortly forthcoming publication of *Tristan* for France, England and Italy. * * *

I should be very glad if you would make this request of mine the occasion of telling me further what view you take of my project. * * * *

342. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

[ZURICH], *8th October*, 1857.

* * Here comes *Tristan*! I hope he will win your interest!—I got through the poem apace as the subject had long been ripening in my mind. And now I have been at work on the composition for several days; naturally it will be a great strain upon me and I may, perhaps, have to make a break some time! You shall have early information of the fate of the work. If any scheme for producing it is successful, I shall hope at last to see you next year. I am not altogether pleased at having to think about the worries of performance already, and yet it was just the practical nature of the enterprise that decided me to take up the work. * * * *

In *Siegfried* I have got as far as the close of Act II. which has turned out tolerably odd and original but pleases me very much. * * *

Well, the *Nibelungs* are laid aside for a year; I hope that they will not have lost their freshness for me by then, and while *Tristan* is letting the world hear something of me again, I shall go on forging the great work for which, however, I must first suitably prepare the world before I can present it to the world.—

The visit of the young Bülow couple was the best thing that happened to me this summer. They stayed three weeks in our little house—in the little nook always ready for you and Emilie!—I have seldom been so agreeably and joyously entertained as by this intimate unceremonious visit. In the mornings they all had to keep quiet while I wrote *Tristan*, and I read them a new act of it each week. For the remainder of the day there was almost always music, for which Frau Wesendonck regularly came across, so that

we had our appreciative little public ready to hand. Bülow's mastery of his instrument is prodigious; his infallible musical intuition, his incredible memory, and his amazing and peculiar facility, his imperturbability and readiness, did me an amazing amount of good.

When you know Cosima I think you will probably agree with me in thinking the young pair most happily endowed. With all their intellect and actual genius there is so much liveliness and buoyancy in these young things that one cannot but feel very happy to be with them. I let them go at last very regretfully, but only on their promising faithfully to come again next year.— * * *

343. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[ZURICH], *1st January*, 1858.

Now let me consecrate my pen for the new year; and better I cannot do it than by greeting you. * * * My first pen-stroke in the new year shall be nothing but a right good resounding greeting to you. I want to tell you as well, however, that yesterday I at last finished Act I. of *Tristan* and that a week ago I serenaded my neighbour Frau Wesendonck on her birthday morning with a quite passable orchestra. * * * I composed something for the occasion, too; and I have now and then amused myself with a little nonsense and set to music some pretty verses which were sent to me, a thing I have never done before.[1] Now I shall work really industriously upon *Tristan*; I must manage to produce it somewhere at the opening of the next winter season.—

My only reading now is Calderon who will ultimately lure me into learning some Spanish. * * *

I have struck up a friendship with the Köchlys simply to avoid being passed over uninvited next time,[2] but I regret it terribly already and all my doting on our Princess cannot give me a taste for this devilish race of professors.[3] But you can see by the above-mentioned attempt how inclined I am to smooth down my angularities and be really amiable at the next visit. * * * *

344. TO HERMANN HÄRTEL (BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL), LEIPZIG

ZURICH, *4th January*, 1858.

* * * * *Tristan and Isolde* is in any case to be first produced in the earlier part of next winter season, that is to say at the end of

[1] Refers to the *Five Poems* for voice and pianoforte.

[2] The Köchlys had invited Princess Wittgenstein and Liszt but not Wagner in 1857.

[3] See No. 318.

this year. I still hope this may take place under my own personal direction at Karlsruhe. Hitherto I have carefully limited the public knowledge of my project, but at the right moment I shall notify the theatres and—in view of the measure of popularity now mine —I assume that a new work of mine which is easy to perform ought to spread quickly [1] through the German theatres even in the first winter. For the realisation of this assumption it is indispensable that the score should be in print as soon as possible, and for this reason alone I must no longer delay in coming to some arrangement about the publication of my opera. You will probably have conjectured already that I should first approach you and your esteemed firm in this matter, and accordingly I herewith offer you *Tristan and Isolde* for publication. It will be less difficult this time, I hope, to determine the conditions of the publishing rights of my work, as there is here no question of the unusual and dubious circumstances necessarily attendant on the publication of my *Nibelung* tetralogy offered to you previously. From the enclosed transcript of the poem which I would ask you to read through, you will perceive at once that I am offering a work more practicable and easier for theatrical production than any of my earlier operas. Instead of attaching difficult conditions to its circulation, my idea this time is to make things attractive and easy. The warm interest of my subject, its happy adaptation to a melodious flow in musical treatment, the effective leading rôles, which should rapidly take their place among the most inviting parts open to our sopranos and tenors—all this satisfies me that, without having especially sought it, I have gone the right way to work to secure a remarkable popular success. Be so good as to tell me frankly then, dear Sir, whether you and your brother feel able to strike this bargain speedily and upon the best possible terms for me? * * *

You will probably wish me to make a definite demand? As we should here find ourselves faced with the same difficulty as in my proffer of the *Nibelungs*, I will rely this time on the fact that it was not so much the amount of my demand as the matter for sale to which you then objected. * * * At that time I asked five hundred louis d'or for each individual work; with far greater confidence that my demands are not exaggerated, I believe that I may somewhat raise my terms for *Tristan* and accordingly suggest to you an honorarium for me of six hundred louis d'or or twelve thousand francs, which I must request shall be paid me in full and in cash by the completion of the work [2]—that is to say, a third part, 4000 francs, at delivery of the score of each of the three acts. The

[1] See No. 338, note 1. [2] An agreement was speedily reached. See No. 347.

following would then have to be decided on as regards the publication. The score should appear in print, and the printing commenced immediately upon delivery of the manuscript, which can be divided for delivery into suitable batches so that the edition should be ready almost directly after the completion of the manuscript.

With special confidence, I have entrusted Herr von Bülow with the making of the pianoforte arrangement. It will be a model of its kind and, above all, not difficult. * * *

I have it particularly in mind to make the libretto lucrative and therefore wish it to be dealt with as follows. Upon the assumption that I am offering no common operatic libretto but a poem which need not fear comparison with the poetic products of our literary period, I wish in the course of the summer—that is to say as soon as I am quite satisfied as to my plan of composition and there are no more textual alterations to be made—to have published a handsome edition of 2000 copies by means of which it may be sufficiently circulated through educated circles in Germany (which probably await a new work of mine after so long an interval with considerable anticipation) to prepare the way adequately for the appearance of the opera on the boards. Then there must be a cheaper stereotype edition provided at a lower price, to be sold as libretti for theatrical use. * * * *

345. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

PARIS, 18*th January*, 1858.

* * * * I feel I must tell you that Cosima's reserve towards me has really grieved me, since I have felt certain that the language question [1] is only a pretext and that as a matter of fact she does seriously feel disconcerted by me. If my manner has seemed peculiar to her, or if she has been hurt by a rough speech here and there or a touch of derision (of Herwegh and the like), I should very much regret having let myself go too far, in confident mood. This is a thing I am always heartily willing to admit and to bewail when I find I have alienated some person whom I really value. It is all a question of misunderstanding as I know very well. My reckless confidingness with people whom I find sympathetic has cost me many an estrangement. I hope that from your dear young wife may not be of long duration!

I have been in Paris two days, partly on business if you like,

[1] Cosima made the pretext of being insufficiently acquainted with German to be able to write to Wagner. In *My Life* Wagner describes more than once her peculiar and difficult attitude to him.

to sound a certain man [1] personally who has offered to negotiate a possible French production of *Tannhäuser* and—in case of success—to secure me copyright in his opera. It was not urgent; but some external motive for a temporary absence from Zurich was not unwelcome to me. * * * *

346. TO ALBERT NIEMANN, HANOVER

PARIS, 20*th January*, 1858.

* * * I have been thinking much of you all this time as I have, for the present, broken off the composition of my *Nibelung* dramas in order first to produce something more practicable. You may expect a new work of mine for next winter, *Tristan and Isolde*, for which I particularly count on your participation and co-operation. As to what I tell you, however, I would urgently beg you to preserve strict secrecy, as whatever happens I do not wish a whisper of it to reach the public as yet.

For the moment it is a pressing matter for me to see my *Rienzi*, which is to be put on simultaneously at Dresden and Weimar in February, produced at the better theatres too. This needs dealing with promptly * *. A little while ago I communicated my wishes in this respect to Herr Rottmaier; as I asked him to give you my kind regards he has probably already spoken of it to you. But what particularly weighs with me in favour of *Rienzi's* coming on now is the hope I have of you in this most brilliant rôle. Tichatschek scored his greatest triumph in it. Unfortunately, however, when I formerly attempted to popularise the opera, suitable singers for the leading parts were nowhere to be found. In Hamburg with the elderly [2] Wurda and in Berlin with that unfortunate fellow Pfister, it was impossible to get an adequate effect. * * * *

347. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

[PARIS, 24*th*–25*th January*, 1858.]

* * * * As my sole object is to safeguard my copyright in my operas (the ostensible reason for my journey) I must naturally take advantage of what comes my way, and that seems quite definitely to be the director of the *Théâtre Lyrique* [Carvalho]. I have seen his theatre; it pleased me quite tolerably. * * * If the manager makes quite special efforts * * I might be able to let him have *Rienzi*—always supposing that I should succeed * * in the exceptional task of carrying through an opera here without dialogue.

[1] See No. 347.

[2] Wurda, however, was by no means old. See Index.

Ollivier, whom I did not meet till yesterday and with whom I am to dine to-day *en garçon*, received me with such affectionate readiness that I thought for a moment that I had arrived at Altenburg. * * *

I had got so far yesterday when Berlioz came to see me. I had then to go out and discovered that I was not well, probably from a chill which is particularly exhausting now because—as I suddenly remembered—I have been eating very little for some time and have grown weak and very thin. * * * *

It is a shame indeed that I should take money from you again, but quite definitely this time I have only borrowed it. * * *

Next to you and Calderon, a glance at the completed first act of *Tristan*, which I have brought with me, has raised my spirits wonderfully to-day. It will be a remarkable piece of music. I feel a violent need to tell someone about it, which I fear may betray me one day into playing parts of it to Berlioz, regardless of whether my beautiful strummings arouse terror or disgust in him. Good God, if only I were with you!— * * * *

* * * Härtel's have replied to my offer of *Tristan*. It was very amusing! Whatever I do will always seem more or less impossible to that Philistine. Well, I am used to that and must trust in the success which has attended my "impossible" conceptions hitherto. In short, Härtel's undertake to publish despite their grave misgivings, but on condition of the reduction of my demand to 200 louis d'or. While they are conscious of making a great sacrifice on my behalf, they declare their readiness to print the full score, etc., forthwith, and I believe I cannot do better than accept. Bülow will have to arrange it.— * * * *

348. TO PRINCESS MARIE WITTGENSTEIN, WEIMAR [1]

ZURICH, *8th February*, 1858.

* * I left Paris tranquillised and even stimulated. For the first time I made sympathetic acquaintances among the French, a thing which seemed almost unthinkable to me previously. Among these I count the Hérold family, to whom Ollivier introduced me. The memory of *Tannhäuser* was alive among them, they having seen it with the greatest satisfaction in Vienna and with great dissatisfaction in Berlin. I was exceedingly surprised by the fervent enthusiasm of this family. I even managed to get a certain amount of cordiality from the Erard [2] family. A very moving adventure, which happened to me in the Strasburg theatre at a surprisingly good

[1] *An Freunde*, p. 213.

[2] See No. 349.

performance of the *Tannhäuser Overture*, had been reported in Paris and directed special interest towards me. I will tell you some time by word of mouth about this adventure,[1] which touched me profoundly; it has had a very decided effect upon my frame of mind. Under such favourable conditions I did not find it difficult to coax a beautiful grand piano for myself out of Madame Erard. I may expect it in a month or six weeks and brother Franz will no longer be able to minister to his pride in being able to manipulate bad pianos in my house so that they sound like good ones. I am looking forward eagerly to the newcomer. I have promised Madame Erard the dedication of the first opera of mine to appear in Paris. Ollivier, as you will have found out, is a most engagingly amiable fellow; his behaviour to me is above all praise. It did me a great deal of good, and moreover the affairs in which I have empowered him to act for me are now so secure in his guardianship that I know that if anyone in Paris wants to have dealings with me the business will be dealt with under the most satisfactory conditions possible. Blandine, as gifted and as deep as her sister, captivates one by her meekness and stillness; her eyes express her father's *loving-kindness*, while Cosima's, rather, shine with his inspiration. When I remember Daniel as well as the two daughters, I have to acknowledge with amazement that here Nature has for once departed very thoroughly from her rule of giving insignificant children to a great father. This must have some particular cause and I can only explain it by the particular character of our Franz. There is some unconscious power in him which induces people to imitate him. I have remarked it as plainly as possible in my own case. Changes occur in my nature, my conduct and behaviour which I often recognise—even in exterior ways—as sheer reproductions of impressions made on me by Liszt. I often notice traits in myself—particularly as regards dignity and assurance in the presence of others—which on consideration remind me so definitely of Liszt that I laughingly recognise myself as his copy. I almost think it will strike you when you visit me again. I shall be very well satisfied if it does, because for me it is a definite advance towards perfection. * * *

On the day I left I had to spend a considerable time with Ollivier in the *Palais de Justice*; I paced up and down the *Salle des Pas Perdus* an hour long with advocates in cap and gown, giving them, at their own wish, an explanation of *Tannhäuser* which they received with great favour. Altogether I have derived a real sense of well-being from this last visit to Paris; I am a much-loved man! * * * The

[1] Cf. *My Life*, pp. 672, 673. (Wagner chanced to hear this overture, was recognised and enthusiastically received.)

admiration which people accord to a great artist passes me by almost entirely, for I lack sharply defined extraordinary talents. What I have is simply the unitive power which binds and fuses ordinary talents so that their combined strength when exerted achieves things technically impossible by an individual talent. This unitive principle is, I believe, complete absorption—forgetfulness of self and of the world about me, a capacity to saturate all my being unreservedly with my subject, which—protected thus from trivial contacts—grows in depth and intensity. This became all the clearer to me for contemplating my opposite, Berlioz.

He has, there is no doubt of it, the gifts of genius without the very essence of them, this unitive power I speak of. He never sees anything but the detail of his subject and his greatness consists in his ability to master this detail vitally. He read aloud to me his operatic libretto [*The Trojan Woman*] and thereby heightened my sorrow on his account to the extent of wishing that I might never see him again, for it must become unbearably painful to be utterly helpless to help a friend. This libretto is manifestly the very acme of his misfortune; it really cannot be outdone. To see this obviously disastrous makeshift delivered by him as the highest, ultimate achievement of his artistic career, the one to which he sacrifices everything, and which he intends shall be his final work, cannot but be more than distressing. The manner in which he delivered the text was to me significant. He read with great energy, with strong emphasis, with all the trappings of inspiration but without a convincing sign of true inspiration, so that his methods often reminded me of a bad actor wrongly cast. The only passion in him was the passion of a self-willed purpose, which, however, never seemed to be entirely certain. I took pains not to let him see my amazement at the unheard-of oddities of the whole, except through my misgivings as to details, by means of which, after all, when the thing has to stand on its own merits in the opera, it can never be rendered intelligible. I took my leave of him in great distress, any expression of which—possibly depressing for him—he rendered superfluous, since *he* never shows genuine interest or sympathy. It is just that there is no love in him; that is the key to the disheartening riddle of his nature. It is a difficult business for his friends to satisfy him. He puts us in the very difficult dilemma of having to deceive ourselves, and ultimately the world too, in order to preserve for him his illusion about himself and us. One can see at the first glance that any attempt at disillusionment must instantly cause a breach and the loss of his friendship, for there was never a soul in this world for whom he would sacrifice himself or his opinions. Under certain

conditions, and by means of strict silence, one may leave the world to its illusions, but to set out to deceive oneself is another matter and this kind of ingenious empiricism is utterly repugnant to me. As, however, it is the only way to bolster up Berlioz's illusions about himself, I am constrained to wish that I may never again be in the painful position of being unable to do a friend service except *so*. God, what a blessing by contrast is my relation to Liszt! * * * You are right indeed to idolise our friendship—its like will not soon be seen again.—

Franz wrote to me recently about Calderon and asked me for advice as to where he ought to make a beginning with him. The theme of *honour* and of Catholicism which struck him most forcibly in my remarks [1] is certainly not to be found clearly displayed in one particular work of art, as he appears to suppose; the sense of its importance came to me rather from the cumulative impression of the whole course of Spanish literature. In those works where honour is the principal theme, the sense of longing for its saving antithesis exists rather as the poet's unexpressed secret; the actual presentation, however, almost always ends with outward homage to the national sentiment, while we are left with a painful realisation that pity has been immolated.[2] In this, no one is more objective than Calderon. Nevertheless this pain is resolved in the spiritual dramas, and it is here that Franz will find what he desires. * * * *

349. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, BERLIN

ZURICH, 10*th February*, 1858.

* * * * Blandine's accounts of Berlin have enchanted me. In few but excellently expressive words she has given me a magnificent picture of Germany's capital city and its inhabitants. I liked her very much and could very soon find myself opening my heart to her entirely. She is profound and still. Her husband has been father, mother and brother to me; his is a fortunate nature, with rare talent for his profession, uncommonly sympathetic, showing great promise. I was very happy with them. I left my Paris affairs—extremely well cared for—in Ollivier's hands.

My actual and immediate Parisian booty is an Erard grand; I was in a good mood at Madame Erard's and easily coaxed this costly production from her. * * *

Well, here I am settled again—longing for rational visitors. Why must you put off your visit till so late? * * *

[1] Cf. a passage in the letter of 24–25 January, not included here (*Wagner–Liszt Correspondence*).

[2] The "national sentiment"—i.e. honour. "Pity" is its "saving antithesis" mentioned above.

* * * One should never make anything to order. * * * I have seen that afresh in Berlioz's unfortunate operatic libretto.[1] As he read it to me a horror seized me which made me want never to meet Berlioz again, because he can cheat neither me nor the world into accepting Berlioz's illusions about himself and me. To see him sitting there brooding over the fate of this nameless absurdity, as if the salvation of the world and his own soul depended on it, is really too much for me. That reminds me of Dorn's *Nibelung* music. I haven't yet thanked you for this interesting present because —frankly—I am not very capable of appreciating it. Really it would not amuse me to look through it. To think that such trash should not have been refused by the orchestra with contumely at the first rehearsal and that it should on the contrary have given my *soit disant* future Brynhilde [Johanna Wagner] occasion to parade some twenty times before the same public to which I desire to exhibit my works—it really is no laughing matter. It has put me in a depressed and gloomy frame of mind.— * * * *

Very soon I shall write particularly to the excellent Cosimus (whose taste for Herwegh I envy) to prove myself worthy of the distinction of getting a letter from him at some distant date. I find that I am still engaged more or less in silent hostilities with her, God knows why. Surely it cannot be pure jealousy of Herwegh? Still, one does sometimes surprise oneself in these weaknesses and the thought that she feels drawn to visit Zurich more for his sake than for mine does annoy me. We will see how I can get rid of this evil vein. For to-day give your Mazeppa steed my heartiest greetings; tell her I understand her and really was fond of her.— * * *

350. TO BREITKOPF AND HÄRTEL, LEIPZIG

ZURICH, *5th April*, 1858.

* * * * Some years ago I drew your attention to my revision of Gluck's *Iphigenia in Aulis*.[2] Your answer seemed to me evasive and I did not wish to trouble you further with this matter. In the previous year this revised version was successful again in Hanover and has been talked of in Vienna, and I asked Bülow to make a pianoforte arrangement with a view to publication in this form. He is now giving the finishing touches and it is my business to see that it is speedily published. I flatter myself that by this revision I have helped considerably to popularise Gluck. * * * As I have re-orchestrated the work, the pianoforte arrangement will also be new and independent of the old one.—

[1] See No. 348.

[2] See No. 230.

Now, Gentlemen, you are probably as much engaged with me as you care to be for the present and may perhaps shrink from venturing with me on a new publishing enterprise, yet before I approach another publisher, I inform you of my project, firstly to give you preference over others, in case you should wish to publish, and secondly because I feel it courteous, in view of our relations hitherto, to offer you the first refusal of a new work.[1] * * * *

351. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, STAYING AT BRESTENBERG

ZURICH, 23*rd April*, 1858.

POOR DEAR MINNA!

Once more I implore you a thousand times, have *patience* and above all have *trust*! If you knew how you torture me by your lack of the latter, you would be sorry, I am sure. Briefly, when you assured me that you really did love me, I adjured you to show it to me by abandoning all arguments and accusations on that count,[2] at least till after your cure, whereupon *I* promised to do everything you wished *on my part* to set you at rest. But the Tempter has got the better of you for the second time and *this* time you have openly broken love and faith with me. I forgive you, in the first place on account of your wretched state of health which has made you almost irresponsible, and more—I forgive it you for all the future. But now I beseech you to bend all your strength of mind to *believing, firmly and unswervingly*, in my sincere life-long sympathy with you, in my heart-felt wish to promote your welfare, in my firm resolution to set my hopes upon no other object. If you cannot do so you will make yourself and me unhappy! I should not have needed this entreaty if you had always had the calmness of mind to judge me fairly, and especially to form a clear idea of that relationship which even now, as I perceive, continues to trouble you unnecessarily, even after you had satisfied yourself about it. From the other side there is only one thing I could be reproached with, and that is that I ever omitted to make plain to you the *purity of these relations*, so that it would have been impossible for you thus to insult the lady concerned. These reproaches *have* been made me by the husband, the man who, ever in his wife's fullest confidence, was always able to bear himself to me with dignity and friendliness, just *because*

[1] The firm agreed but the score is still unprinted (Spring 1925).

[2] Minna had opened a letter from her husband to Frau Wesendonck and, being at the time in a state of nervous excitement from her heart disease, had drawn unworthy inferences and admonished Frau Wesendonck before the latter's husband. Cf. *My Life*, pp. 679 *et seq.*

he was convinced of the innocence of our relations. The only excuse I could offer him on this point was that I believed it to be impossible to convince *you* of anything of that kind—and, alas! despite all my assurances, that appears to be proving true.— * * * *

352. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *Tuesday, 27th April,* 1858.

On this date, dear Minna, I have decided to get myself put, not into a hydropathic establishment, but into a mad-house—for that seems the only proper place for me now! Whatever I say or write with the best intentions in the world, I stir up nothing but unhappiness and misunderstanding. If I am silent about certain things, I make you suspicious and jealous that I am doing something behind your back, and then if I write seriously and openly and—as I thought, ass that I am—at the same time quite reassuringly, I hear that I have been plotting with a refinement of malignity to get you under the sod with all speed! In the same breath I am told to be a *man*! Good, then, I will be not *a* man but *your* man; only tell me how I am to speak, think and look at the world; I will always shape my course in strict accordance and say nothing, think nothing and see nothing of which you don't approve; will that satisfy you? Only, always tell me, too, what and how I am to compose, write and conduct; I will be governed by you in everything so that you cannot doubt me a moment more. For everything I do of myself, in *my* way, you imagine does not really come from me but from someone or other who has an end to serve through me. Well, then, that shall be so no more. I shall never again look to right or left, and if you can still doubt that I am living for you only, that I love you and adore you, then it won't be *my* fault any longer.

God knows if I have put you in a good humour with the above as I intended, or if you will think it more refined malignity on my part. I am in such doubt about everything I say and do that I may soon be carried about like a baby. But all that won't matter if only you will put these horrible fancies behind you and recognise that at least I have the best, most honourable intention of showing myself good, grateful, true and attached, loving and thoughtful to you. Or am I to end by being like Sulzer before his marriage and hating all "women-kind" in the mass and wishing there were none but men in the world?—

God in heaven, what am I to do, to content you?— * * * *

353. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, *Monday, 3rd May*, 1858.

The Erard has just been unpacked and set up, dear Minna, in spite of wind and weather. What a delight it is to play on such an instrument only the player himself can really appreciate; the least pressure, scarcely touching, at once produces a gentle bell-like tone which, when one presses somewhat harder, becomes a full, clear, yet always soft, mellow chime. I can play so softly on it that nobody in the next room would hear me when I am composing. So *one* joy has stolen, friendly, into my life!

Now *you* must give me the great joy of soon knowing that you are on the way to health. That will be the only joy that still remains. * * * *

I have been greatly troubled to see, as I did at our leave-taking, that you are always relapsing into your dark, self-tormenting fancies. For Heaven's sake, don't fasten on single words and phrases of mine, which indeed you always misunderstand. Do consider with a little justice and due reflection that I cannot always be keeping a single eye on the possible effect on you of everything I say. If I show you how serious a matter it was with me, do still base your final judgment on my actions, that is to say, on my ultimate decisions when the conflict and the doubts are over. You really need a thoroughly sensible, experienced and good-hearted friend of your own sex just now to advise you and explain matters, as it is impossible for *me* to do without at once arousing fresh misunderstandings, which truly I never intended to do. * * * Think of nothing beyond your cure. Believe firmly and steadfastly that I am concealing nothing from you which could cause you anxiety on *my* account. Be sure of me, and be confident that there is nothing in this world and this life I hope or wish for more, than rest and peace to be able to fulfil the task which is my one support. So let us bear our appointed lot together, be lenient to each other's weaknesses, and loyally help each other to fulfil life's heavy task with cheerfulness and equanimity!— * * * *

354. TO FRAU JULIE RITTER, DRESDEN

ZURICH, *11th May*, 1858.

O YOU DEAR PRECIOUS FRIEND!

—It has done my heart good to see your handwriting again. No dearer or more beautiful gift could be made to me than these blessed lines of yours. You cannot guess what sufferings I have been through again—how sad my whole outlook is despite the

laughing spring; and I will not torment your dear sympathetic heart by letting you look into this comfortless state of things! It is enough for me to tell you that my wife's state of health has finally become most distressing. * * * She has been with Dr. Erismann at Brestenberg for the last month. * * * So just for the present I am at least in outward peace, even though troubles of various sorts have not left me. But what I have had to endure this winter in this respect alone could only be understood by those who know what these heart sorrows are like. * * * A few months ago I applied to the Court at Dresden for permission to return for a period to Germany. I have had no answer, but I am told that next year the amnesty question is to be settled as far as Saxony is concerned. So I must be patient.

* * * Well, I have resumed the long-interrupted composition of *Tristan* at the second act. Oh, if only I could immerse myself undisturbed in this work which lies so near my heart till its completion, if I could be spared the vulgar and horrible plagues of my existence, at least till then!— * * * *

355. TO HANS VON BÜLOW, STAYING AT WEIMAR

ZURICH, 31*st May*, 1858.

* * * I have really grave doubts about urging you to attack the pianoforte arrangement [1] * * [of *Tristan*]. I certainly have no need to tell you how glad I am that you appear to attach value to this work; nevertheless I am reluctant to accept such proffers from you. The time you needed for the easy *Iphigenia* is enough to show me how very little you have to spare for such work and how much you are taken up with lesson-giving and other business. If any real artistic work was included in this business I should not have a word to say and be simply grateful to you for making time somehow for work of a subordinate nature. As, however, I am unfortunately led to suppose that you hardly ever manage to get time for creative work of your own, it becomes a reproach to me which I cannot lightly and egotistically brush aside. Under these conditions to press you as necessitated by my engagements with Härtel's would be a most unpleasant task to me. Accordingly I ask you to consider, quietly and seriously, whether you were not overtaxing your powers and, more particularly, neglecting the duty you owe to yourself, when you so kindly offered to undertake the pianoforte arrangement of my new work? I fear that it is so, and if I am right I beg you to lay aside all false delicacy and tell me speedily

[1] See No. 359.

and definitely that you agree that my work shall be passed on to another. Chance (an important chance for me) has now brought little Tausig my way; he could do the pianoforte arrangement quickly and easily with me and under my eye. It will be an exercise and a study for him while for you—if I am to think of you as I love to do—it can only be a hindrance to more important work suitable to you. The practical side and the advantage of getting the work done quicker I leave altogether out of consideration, and I hope that you have too secure a belief in my friendship for you to think that any such advantage could influence me to do you the slightest injury or impinge upon you in any matter which you could really suppose advantageous to yourself. Consequently I would ask you when forming your decision [1] (which I shall expect very soon) to weigh carefully what I have just said, and not for anything in the world to read any unworthy motive into my representations to you. For you know how dearly I love you! * * * *

356. TO HIS WIFE, MINNA WAGNER, STAYING AT BRESTENBERG

ZURICH, *Thursday, 3rd June,* 1858.

MY DEAR CHILD,

You have not quite rightly understood and appraised the gravity of what I have told you, but probably you are not equal to doing so yet, and in any case it alters nothing in me nor in my course of action. Cling to that, and judge of my intentions from it, and you will never have reason to complain. So, first and foremost, now and always, peace! No more brooding; everything is open and straightforward, and the resolution, nay the hope, is sure that everything will turn out, gently and quietly, for the best. No more about it now, then! * * * *

* * * The Wesendoncks arrived the evening before last. He called upon me yesterday and invited me to tea, whereupon I explained very delicately in writing that for the future we should remain on friendly terms but without personal intercourse. Let it remain like that!—and I beg you most earnestly to abstain from any kind of interference; it would only have results which I should be forced to regard as a fresh breach of your trust! This must be *my* affair entirely and I hope you will fall in with me this time at least. There is no question here of strength or weakness on my part but simply of this—that my course appears to me to be the only way to avoid countless possible unpleasantnesses, provided we intend to remain *here.*—

[1] See No. 359.

357. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *2nd July*, 1858.

* * * * The Grand Duke will have already delivered you my greeting, which he asked me very prettily to entrust to him. *I* hardly thought it becoming to charge others with my greetings like that. He is a thoroughly likeable prince and the training received from you becomes him very well. What I liked best about him was that he boasted of this influence of yours. For the rest, we had quite a tolerable little gossip together, during which I was very much amused by Beaulieu's interjections. The latter played the Spanish "Gracioso" very well, revealing the hollowness of artistic pathos every moment. I could almost flatter myself that H. R. H. was jealous of the Grand Duke of Baden and to ease his mind I felt it a duty to tell him in some detail of my *Tristan* project, originally based on Strasburg but later transplanted to Karlsruhe through Devrient's intervention. H. R. H. particularly wished to know whether, in the event of my being enabled to return to Germany, I should go to Weimar or prefer some other "engagement," whereupon I explained to him that the only advantage I expected from my amnesty was to be able to visit Germany periodically and that for that purpose I had chosen your house, just because it was your house, as my base.[1] * * *

You have given me a great joy in little Tausig. When he walked in one morning with your letter I shook you warmly by the hand! He is a terrible lad. At one moment I am amazed by his highly developed intellect, at another, by his wild ways. He is certain to become something extraordinary if he becomes anything at all. When I see him smoking frightfully strong cigars and drinking endless draughts of tea, I am as scared as the hen who sees the ducklings she has mistakenly hatched taking to the water. What will become of him I cannot imagine, but he gets no schnapps or rum from me. I should unhesitatingly have taken him to live in my house if we did not mutually annoy each other by piano-playing, so I have found him a little nook quite close at hand where he can just sleep and work and do the rest of the day's business with me. He does little credit, however, to my table, which is quite passably well provided, despite my grass-widowhood. * * * He loathes going for walks and yet declares when I propose to leave him at home that he would like to come; then after the first half-hour he contends he has been walking a good four hours and at the slightest protest on my part contradicts me mercilessly. He must have behaved quite differently to you, but there seems to be something

[1] See No. 358.

about me that strongly lures young people on to naughtiness; I discovered that in due time with Karl Ritter. And so my childless marriage has suddenly been blessed with a wealth of calamity, and I swallow the quintessence of paternal cares and worries in rapid doses. That has done me a lot of good over and again; it has been a superb diversion for me and, as I say, I am very grateful to you! You knew what I wanted. Of course the lad pleases me very much in other ways and although he behaves like a scamp of a boy, he talks like an old man and a very penetrating one too. Whatever subject I introduce he can follow with undoubted clarity of mind and great receptivity. At the same time it touches and moves me when the lad shows a depth and tenderness of feeling, a wide sympathy which wins me irresistibly. In any case he is immensely gifted musically and his frenzied piano-playing awes me. * * *

I am expecting the Bülows shortly and look forward very much to having them. I have a specially warm place in my heart now for Hans. Cosima is more drawn to Herwegh. I probably repel her in some way, but we are excellent friends all the same!—

My poor wife is to finish her cure (which will have lasted three months) and return home in a fortnight. The anxiety about her was terrible. * * * *

358. TO FRAU MATHILDE WESENDONCK, ZURICH

[ZURICH, ASYL, *6th July, Tuesday morning*, 1858.]

You will certainly not expect me to leave your beautiful glorious letter unanswered? Or ought I, to do the noblest thing, to renounce the dear right of replying? But how could I answer you in a way worthy of you?

These tremendous conflicts we undergo—how could they end, save in victory over every wish and desire?

Did we not know, even in the most ardent moments of our drawing together, that this was our goal?

Yes! And only because of its supreme difficulty did it need such hard struggles to achieve. Have we fought out all our battles now —or can there be more before us? Indeed, I feel profoundly that they are all over!

A month ago, when I told your husband of my decision to break off personal intercourse with you, I—renounced you. And yet at that time I was not perfectly innocent. I simply felt that only absolute separation—or absolute union—could save our love from the terrible handling to which we have seen it exposed lately.

Over against the sense of the necessity of parting there stood involuntarily a feeling of the possibility of reunion. This produced an agonised tension which we were both unable to bear. I came to you and at once it was plain to both that every other possibility involved a sacrilege which we might not even contemplate.

This entirely altered the character of our necessary renunciation. The agony gave place to the gentleness of an expiatory freedom. The last trace of egotism vanished from my heart and my decision to visit you again proved the victory of the purest altruism over the last stirring of selfish desire. All I wanted was to reconcile, to soothe, to comfort—to cheer and thus to win, even for myself, the sole happiness which may yet be mine.

Never before in my life have my feelings been so profound or so terrible as in these last months. All previous experiences were insubstantial compared with these. The violence of the emotion which shook me when the catastrophe came, could not but leave deep scars and, if anything could have added to the burden on my mind, it was my wife's condition. For two months I had to face daily the possibility of news of her sudden death; for the doctor was obliged to tell me that it was a possibility. Everything about me exhaled the very smell of death; whether I looked forwards or backwards I saw nothing but the image of death, and life—as such—lost its last charm for me. While I was bound to spare my unhappy wife in every possible way I had to make up my mind to break up our new-found hearth and home, and to let her know of it, to her great consternation.

What did I feel, do you think, when in this lovely summer weather I gazed at my exquisite Asyl, absolutely fitted to my desires, as I strolled at morning in the dear little garden, looked at the great burst of bloom, listened to the white-throats who had nested in the little rose-tree? What this rending away from this anchor-hold means to me, you, who know my mind more intimately than any other, can tell! I fled from the world before—do you think I could return to it now—now, when, grown unaccustomed to its contacts through lapse of time, my sensibility has immensely increased? Even my recent meeting with the Grand Duke of Weimar showed me more clearly than ever that I can only flourish in absolute independence and must firmly refuse any suggestion of entering into any kind of contract, even with this not unamiable prince. I can never, never return to the world again. To settle permanently in a big town is unthinkable. Am I, then, to found a new refuge, a new hearth, when I have had to leave behind me in ruins this one, scarcely enjoyed, which friendship and the most

MATHILDE WESENDONCK

After a drawing by Ernst von Kietz, 1856. From a photograph in the possession of the Stadtgeschichtliches Muesum, Leipzig

generous love built for me in an enchanting paradise? Oh no! To leave here means for me—to go under!

With these wounds in my heart I cannot try ever again to make myself a home!

My child, there is only one salvation for me that I can think of, and this can come only from the profoundest depths of the heart, not from any outward circumstances. It is rest, rest from longing, the stilling of every desire! Noble, worthy victory! To live for others, for others—and so find comfort ourselves!

Now you know my soul's full grave and resolute mood. It is linked with my outlook on life, with all the future, with all I care for—and so with you who are my dearest! And now, upon the ruins of this world of longing, let me—make you happy!

You see, I have never in my life been importunate, never in any circumstances; instead I have always been almost exaggeratedly sensitive. Now I mean to seem importunate to you for the first time and to beg you to be utterly at rest on my account. I shall not often come to see you, for henceforth you shall only see me when I am sure of being able to show you a happy and peaceful countenance. Once upon a time I came to your house in sorrow and longing; I brought unrest and pain to the place where I came seeking comfort. That shall no longer be. So, when for a while you do not see me, pray for me in silence!—for you may know that I am suffering! But when I come to you be assured that I am bringing a lovely gift from my own life to your house—a gift such as it is perhaps given to me alone to give, to me, who suffered so much and so willingly.

Probably—nay certainly—the day will shortly come, I think early in the winter, when I shall absent myself from Zurich for a long time. My amnesty, which I expect soon, will open Germany to me again and I shall go back there periodically to get the one thing which I cannot get here. Then you will not see me for long periods. But to come back again to the Asyl which has grown so dear to me, to rest from worries and inevitable vexation, to breathe sweet air and gain fresh energy for the old tasks for which nature has chosen me—this, if you will grant it, will always be the gentle beam of light which will sustain me over there, the sweet comfort which will beckon me here.

And—have you not conferred on me the highest of life's benefits? Have I not thanked you for the one thing on earth that can still seem to me worthy of thanks? And should I not try to requite you for what you have attained for me with unspeakable sacrifice and suffering?

My child, these last months have notably whitened the hair at my temples. There is a voice within me calling me to rest—the rest which, long years ago, I made my *Flying Dutchman* desire. It was the yearning for "home," not for the luxurious enjoyment of love! Only a true, glorious woman could gain that home for him. Let us consecrate ourselves to this lovely Death, which covers and stills all our longings and desires. Let us die blessedly, with peaceful illumined glance, with the holy smile of beautiful victory! And—none shall lose if we—are victorious!

Farewell, my dear blessed angel!

359. TO FRANZ LISZT, WEIMAR

ZURICH, *8th July*, 1858.

* * Our letters have crossed. Only a few lines to-day about the suspicion attaching to Tausig. He told me how you admonished him for his reputed ungrateful behaviour to Bülow. The incident has really grieved me, because I have learned thereby of an evident weakness in the character of our good Hans and I have made no secret about it to him. The origin of the affair was briefly as follows. Hans had promised to finish a pianoforte arrangement of *Iphigenia* quickly for me; as there was considerable delay and I was furthermore under strict agreement with Härtel's for the punctuality of Hans's arrangement of *Tristan*, I considered whether, on second thoughts, it was not unjust to burden Bülow with such work, his zeal notwithstanding. Moreover, it was clear to me that Hans is so very busy that he could not possibly accomplish even this eagerly accepted work without being rushed. If I thought that creative work of his own, composition, etc., had any place among his activities and hindrances, I should have been sorry to say anything to him, but as a matter of fact I feel sure that these pianoforte arrangements (which he doesn't find time to do) rob him of the last chance of getting time to do his own work. I felt this was a definite reproach to me; previously it made me give the *Nibelungs* arrangements to Klindworth, because Hans was then in the like situation and unable to proceed with a pianoforte arrangement, without words, of *Tannhäuser*, while Klindworth, having given up all idea of a career as a composer, and having few current lessons, caused me less misgiving than Hans, whose powers were already too much dissipated. Well, I wrote to him a little while ago at Weimar (where he was staying with you) and admonished[1] him not to dissipate his forces further, even out of zeal for me, but rather to

[1] See No. 355.

give me the pleasure of hearing of fresh creative work from him. His answer depressed me profoundly, for I saw Hans thought me insincere in my account of motive, and openly imputed that I had been influenced either by Tausig's importunacy, he being always in want of money, or (*this strictly between ourselves!*) by insinuations from Altenburg.[1] The last supposition in particular dashed me completely, because it convinced me that politics and diplomacy were beginning to operate far outside their proper sphere. I told Hans openly what I felt and reproached him with having distrusted my honesty, saying nothing could disgust me more than to see strange and distorting influences read into my motives. I have been as little influenced from Altenburg in my proposal to let Tausig arrange *Tristan* as by Tausig himself. As I assured him again, I was decided by my anxiety for Hans himself. * * * As I could see from his answer, however, the great value he attached to the work on *Tristan*, it was understood that he should retain it.—

I wish Hans had let you hear of this letter and so spared Tausig from reproaches, this time most unjust. Tausig was anxious to study what I had finished of *Siegfried* and to this end he began a pianoforte arrangement of the first act. This work gave me the idea—things being as I have told you with Bülow—of offering him *Tristan*. He undertook it with hesitation and on condition that Bülow, whom he would not cross for the world, was willing to give up the work. He would not hear of a fee under any circumstances, neither has he ever given me an inkling of any monetary embarrassments. * * * *

360. TO THE SAME

ZURICH, 11*th August*, 1858.

* * * You could only understand my position if you were actually present.

Therefore only this much by letter. For weeks I have been yearning for the day of my departure hence. I *can* leave on the 14th, which is as much as to say I *must* leave.

I shall write to you again from wherever I first settle temporarily. It was very painful not to have you beside me at this important crisis in my life. * * *

[1] i.e. the Princess. Cf. Wagner's letter to Bülow, 8 June, 1858.

END OF VOL. I

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

I. Student Years, "Wanderjahre" and First Residence in Paris

1813.	22 May.	Birth of Wagner.
1814.	Aug.	Wagner's mother and her second husband, Ludwig Geyer, actor and portrait painter (married 14 Aug.), remove to Dresden with their family.
1821.	30 Sept.	Death of Ludwig Geyer.
1822.	2 Dec.	Wagner (then known as Richard Geyer) goes to the Kreuzschule at Dresden.
1827.	8 April.	Wagner confirmed at the Kreuzkirche (Church of the Holy Cross).
	Dec.	Wagner follows his family (who had left Dresden in April) to Leipzig and goes to the Nicolai Gymnasium.
1830.	Oct.	Wagner in the first form at the Thomasschule.
	24 Dec.	Wagner's *Concert Overture in B flat* conducted by Heinrich Dorn at the Leipzig Gewandhaus.
1831.	Feb.	Wagner matriculates as student of music at the University of Leipzig.
1832.	Summer.	Wagner travels to Vienna and Prague.
1833.	10 Jan.	Wagner's *Symphony in C major* performed at the Leipzig Gewandhaus.
	End of Jan.	Wagner conductor of the chorus at Würzburg theatre.
1834.	1 Jan.	Score for an opera, *Die Feen*, completed. Shortly after Wagner returns to Leipzig.
	10 Jan.	Wagner's first literary effort, *German Opera*, appears in Laube's *Zeitung für die elegante Welt.*
	Summer.	Wagner goes to Teplitz.
	End of July.	Wagner takes the post of kapellmeister to Bethmann's company (season beginning in Magdeburg in October).

1836.	29 March.	First performance of *The Novice of Palermo* (*Liebesverbot*) at Magdeburg.
	24 Nov.	Wagner marries Minna Planer at Königsberg.
1837.	3 Aug.	Wagner becomes kapellmeister at the theatre in Riga.
1839.	End of June.	Wagner and his wife flee from creditors to Pillau and thence by sailing-ship to London.
	18 Sept.	Arrival in Paris.
1840.	19 Nov.	Score of *Rienzi* completed.
1841.		Score of *The Flying Dutchman* completed.
1842.	7 April.	Wagner and his wife leave Paris and go to Dresden.

II. Dresden, 1842–1849

1842.	20 Oct.	First performance of *Rienzi* in Dresden.
1843.	2 Jan.	First performance of *Flying Dutchman* in Dresden.
	2 Feb.	Wagner appointed Court Kapellmeister to the King of Saxony.
1844.	7 Jan.	First performance of *The Flying Dutchman* in Berlin.
1845.	13 April.	Score of *Tannhäuser* completed.
	19 Oct.	First performance of *Tannhäuser* in Dresden.
1846.	5 April.	Beethoven's Ninth Symphony conducted by Wagner.
1847.	26 Oct.	First performance of *Rienzi* in Berlin.
1848.	9 Jan.	Death of Wagner's mother.
	End of March.	Score of *Lohengrin* completed.
	2 July.	Wagner receives a month's leave to go to Vienna.
	22 Sept.	Celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the Royal Orchestra in Dresden.
1849.	16 Feb.	First performance of *Tannhäuser* in Weimar under Liszt.
	9 May.	As a result of his part in the unsuccessful Rising Wagner flees from Dresden to Chemnitz, thence to Liszt at Weimar, 13 May, and afterwards to Zurich.

III. Years of Banishment up to the Departure from the "Asyl" in Zurich, 1849–1858

1850.	15 Jan.	Wagner conducts for the first time a subscription concert of the *Allgemeine Musikgesellschaft* at Zurich.
	28 Aug.	First performance of *Lohengrin* in Weimar, under Liszt.
	24 Nov.	*Tannhäuser Overture* performed in Paris.
1851.	17 Sept.–22 Nov.	Wagner stays at the Albisbrunn Hydro.
1852.	April.	Wagner conducts a performance of *The Flying Dutchman* in Zurich.
1853.	18 May.	A concert of selections from Wagner's works at Zurich.
	2 July.	Liszt visits Wagner.
	6 Oct.	Wagner meets Liszt, Bülow, Joachim and Cornelius in Basle.
	10 Oct.	Wagner accompanies Liszt on a short visit to Paris.
1854.	7 Jan.	Unsuccessful performance of *Lohengrin* in Leipzig.
	28 May.	Score of *The Rhinegold* completed.
1855.	20 Feb.	Wagner goes to London via Paris.
	12 March.	Wagner conducts in London for the first time.
	25 June.	Wagner's last London concert, followed next day by his return to Zurich via Paris.
1856.	7 Jan.	First performance in Berlin of *Tannhäuser*.
	End of April.	Score of *The Valkyrie* completed.
	13 Oct.	Liszt and the Princess Wittgenstein come to Wagner for a long visit.
1857.	28 April.	Wagner moves into the "Asyl."
1858.	Jan.	Visit to Paris.
	17 Aug.	Wagner leaves Zurich.

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